

LESSON 8

THE WAY OF HOLINESS

James 3:1-5:20

Introduction

Chapters 3-5 continue with small paraneitic units on various subjects. James was concerned with various areas of life which prevent Christians from living separated lives of holiness. He recognized the importance of man's speech, daily actions, relation to possessions, and beliefs. These areas are inter-related. For example, man's beliefs affect his conduct. James selected areas of obvious difficulty and had some very pointed but helpful advice to give concerning them.

Man's Speech and Holiness

James 3:1-12

Controlling the tongue (3:1-5)

Speech is very important in many occupations, but the teacher is more dependent on it than manual workers. For the teacher, words are media of works. In the previous section, James reminded his readers that faith without works is dead. Since the words of the teacher are his works, he must give care to use them according to faith, that is, in conformity with the teachings of Christ.

James' advice to teachers recalls the words of Jesus: "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36f.). Since the use of words is so important, the teacher especially needs to give care to them. A teacher influences the thinking, and thus the activities of other persons. Teachers of false philosophies turn people away from God and thus receive a greater condemnation (v. 1). Vile or unkind language can prevent many from entering the Kingdom of God. Apparently James included himself among teachers, for he used the first person plural (we) in his warning against offending by the use of words. The danger of falling into condemnation is so great that James concluded not many should be teachers.

<p><i>In Chapters 3-5, James dealt with man's s _____, daily a _____, relation to p _____, and b _____.</i></p> <p><i>(speech, actions, possessions, beliefs)</i></p>
<p><i>The teacher must use his _____, or works, according to faith--conformity to the teachings of _____.</i></p> <p><i>(words, Christ)</i></p>
<p><i>A teacher influences _____ which controls _____.</i></p> <p><i>(thinking, actions)</i></p>

The very nature of the work of teaching requires critical judgement concerning philosophies and morals. Jesus warned that a person will be judged by the judgement he passes upon others. One who teaches and states what is right is obligated to live according to his teachings. If a man fails to do what he has told others to do, he receives greater condemnation because he cannot plead innocence on the basis of ignorance. A teacher should choose that vocation only if he is convinced that it is God's will. Since he stands in judgement before God, he must be sure that what he teaches pleases God.

James admitted that everyone makes mistakes. A mistake in the use of speech is very serious because it involves others. Besides, man's speech is the most difficult activity to control. If he is able to control his words, he is a perfect man (v. 2). In quoting from the Psalms, Paul warned: "There is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (Rom. 3:12b-14). James concluded that if a man has the power to control his tongue, he has the power to bring all the members of his body under control.

To illustrate the importance of controlling the tongue, James used the example of the bit in the horse's mouth. Man controls the horse by controlling his mouth. The bit brings the horse into obedience to man, enabling man to turn its whole body about (v. 3). A second illustration used is the rudder of a ship. A large, heavy ship can be guided by a very small rudder, even in fierce winds (v. 4). Man is comparatively small in relation to the ship which he pilots; yet, he can turn the entire ship by using the small rudder. The small bit and rudder achieve great results. So does the tongue which is a little but powerful member of the human body. It can speak of great things. On the other hand, it can be like a small flame of fire which can begin a holocaust.

Misusing the tongue (3:6-12)

The concluding statement in verse 5 makes reference to the amount of damage the tongue can do. Verses 6 and following elaborate on this theme. The tongue is compared to a flame which is little more than a spark in its beginning but it can spread and cause great destruction (v. 6). A fire started by a match an inch long can spread across hundreds of acres of timber, causing millions of dollars of loss and threatening lives. In a similar way, the tongue can make one small statement which may result in the destruction of someone's character and in great human suffering.

One who teaches and states what is right is obligated to _____ according to his teachings.

(live)

A mistake in speech is very serious because it involves _____.

Underline the correct word.

According to James, control of one's tongue signifies control of (all, some) members of his body.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

James illustrated the importance of controlling the tongue by describing:

*the _____ in the _____ mouth and
the _____ of a _____.*

(bit, horse's, rudder, ship)

The nature of human life is one reason the tongue is so important. Relationships are basic to human society and religion. Man differs from vegetables in that he is able to relate to God and to his fellow-man. The medium of his relationship is his speech which expresses his internal being. Man's speech can either establish relationships or destroy them. It can destroy also the relationships of others. Since it is the means by which the internal man relates to the world about him, the tongue exercises its influence through the whole course of human life. Its influence continually spreads out in all directions.

The tongue "is set on fire by hell" (v. 6-NASB). The devil, who is connected with hell, uses the tongue to inflame human passions and to infect human life throughout its entire existence. The fire of hell and the destructive nature of the tongue are related. The unrepentant sinner, whose tongue is like fire, will be punished ultimately in the fire of Gehenna (v. 6). The vicious character of Satan and the destructive nature of hell are revealed by the misuse of the tongue.

The world is filled with wild animals, but man is able to tame even poisonous serpents and creatures of the sea (v. 7). However, through man's fall into sin he has lost control of a destructive member of his body (v. 8). It is evil in itself, "an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Sometimes it is used for a beneficial and worthy purpose, such as giving glory to God (v. 9). Since the Lord is also Father, to pronounce the blessings upon the Father is to include His household, but man's tongue is so evil that it curses men who are in the image of God and of the household of God. To curse God's creatures made in His likeness is to disrespect the Creator. A curse expresses the hope that evil and tragedy will come to a person.

James concluded that it is unnatural for blessings and cursings to come out of the same mouth (v. 10). In the realm of nature, a traveller does not find a fountain or spring sending forth both fresh and salt water (v. 11). Trees do not produce two kinds of fruit. By using these analogies, James concluded that man's tongue should not produce two kinds of fruit (v. 12).

Man's Conduct and Holiness

James 3:13-4:12

Man's conduct reveals his wisdom (3:13-18)

Verse 13 begins with a rhetorical interrogative which is characteristic of the diatribe. The question raised about wisdom and understanding is not completely unrelated to the preceding discussion on the

Fill in the blanks with the following words:

nature means
others speech

Man's _____ expresses his inner _____
and is the _____ by which the total
person relates to _____.

(speech, nature, means, others)

Through man's fall into sin, he lost
control of his _____.

(tongue)

Underline the correct word.

It is (natural, unnatural) for blessings
and cursings to come from the same mouth.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

tongue. The tongue is controlled by the thinking of man. The wise thoughts of a man are revealed by his speech. But speech is not the only way that a man reveals his inner life. His good life ("good conversation") is revealed by his works (v. 13).

A wise man is one who lives a good life. A person can have professional knowledge without knowing how to conduct his life. The mature Christian who walks by faith in Christ wisely keeps his life under control.

When life is controlled by feelings and selfish ambitions, the result is envy, strife, and falsehood (v. 14). The life characterized by these wrong attitudes is not following the wisdom which comes from above (v. 15). Paul described such persons as carnal or fleshly. James described them as earthly, sensual, and devilish (v. 15). For them, wisdom which gives direction to right living is absent. It is replaced by wrong desires of selfish ambition and jealousy, by confusion, and by evil work (v. 16). Those characteristics which inevitably accompany jealousy and selfish ambitions are the things most opposed by God.

The wise life which is controlled from above is contrasted to the bitter jealousy and selfish ambition of the person whose life is controlled from below instead of from above. It produces peaceable, equitable, approachable, and merciful life which is free from fault (v. 17). The life is wholly free from such defilements as characterize the earthly life. The peaceable life is not demanding on others. The approachable life is open to reasonable requests. The merciful life expresses sympathy towards the suffering and the sorrowing. The equitable life is free from hypocrisy; therefore, it does not show partiality. The life controlled from above produces works which are characterized by righteousness (v. 18). Such a life brings inward peace, for "the work of righteousness shall be peace" (Isa. 32:17). The righteous man, who enjoys inner peace because he has met the claims of justice and has pleased God, is a peacemaker in his relation to others. According to Jesus, peacemakers are akin to God as sons (Matt. 5:9).

The source of strife (4:1-10)

Man who is righteous experiences an inner peace in his relation to God and an external peace in his dealings with man. But the man who is unrighteous knows external strife with others and internal turmoil in his relationship with God. The life of wisdom can be described best by peace. The life of unrighteousness is described best by strife. The strife which exists between nations and results in wars and fightings is evidence of the unrighteous nature of this world. Worldly history is dominated by strife rather than peace. Strife is present universally because of the

A person reveals his nature by his s _____
and his a _____.

(speech, actions)

Continue reading through the fourth paragraph.

Then place the following descriptive words under the correct heading below.

<i>carnal</i>	<i>sensual</i>
<i>approachable</i>	<i>righteous</i>
<i>merciful</i>	<i>selfish</i>
<i>devilish</i>	<i>equitable</i>
<i>earthly</i>	<i>jealous</i>
<i>peaceable</i>	

Life controlled from above

Life controlled by feelings and selfish ambitions

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Finish reading this paragraph which continues on the next page. Then fill in the blanks in the statement below.

The source of strife is _____, which means strong _____ out of control.

(lust, desires)

lusts (wrong desires or pleasures of this life) which characterize man (v. 1).

The natural man is given desires which are not wrong. They are the forces behind his instinctive drives which are essential to procreation and preservation. When these desires are allowed to get out of hand and man seeks fulfilment of them outside their intended purposes, they change from characteristics which are essential to life to destructive forces of society and life.

God has placed certain desires within man in order that his life may come to fulfilment. When man's centre of life changes from the fulfilment of God's will to the pursuing of physical desires as ends within themselves, a person's life and character become perverted. Disorder and strife result (v. 1). An over-emphasis on personal desires results in actions which infringe on the desires and rights of others; therefore, even among Christians there are "wars and fightings" (v. 1). Lust is like an invading army which comes in and controls the life of a person but does not bring satisfaction. The perverted desires control every part of the human nature, a condition described doctrinally as total depravity. The totally depraved life has no concern for others but is willing to kill if necessary to obtain what it wants (v. 2). A contemporary example is the dope addict who becomes so desperate that he will kill a store manager to get more money for buying more dope, which leads him deeper into his troubles. The desired pleasure which drives the person to dope is never satisfied. Perhaps the verse should read, "You desire and have not, thus you kill. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and wage war" (v. 2).

Uncontrolled, thwarted desire leads to murder, and unsatisfied covetousness leads to battle. The histories of nations and individuals bear witness to these principles. Historians and politicians speak of just and unjust wars. Behind every war is covetousness. Perhaps James was not speaking of a particular incident in the life of one of the Christian communities which he addressed, but he was setting forth general principles and was warning what can happen when lust and covetousness (the pleasures of this world) dominate one's life.

The Christian can obtain the satisfaction of desires by simply asking: "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (v. 2). That does not mean that the desires for the pleasures of this world will be satisfied: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (v. 3). But the pleasures of the world never satisfy the innermost cravings of the human heart. Man's basic need is to experience meaning and purpose in life. Many conclude that life's meaning is found in worldly pleasures; therefore, they pray for that which may be consumed by

Lust results in actions which infringe on the desires and rights of _____.

Some of these actions are _____, _____, and _____.

(others, wars, fightings, murder)

Many people believe that life's meaning is found in w _____ p _____.

"Asking amiss" means asking mistakenly for that which may be consumed by one's _____.

(worldly pleasures, lust)

their lusts. God will not answer selfish prayers which result in turning man's life more in the direction of the world than in the direction of God. He will answer prayers which are prayed according to His will.

If verse 4 reflected a particular situation in a church that James knew about, the morals among the Christians were sadly lacking. Perhaps his reference to adulterers and adulteresses was selected to illustrate those who were obviously in friendship with the world. The physical relation of man and woman is part of God's plan for the home; therefore, desires for such relationship have been placed within the human nature. When this divinely created nature is abused and expressed outside God's plan, it is placed in the category of worldliness which is enmity towards God. Such actions distort God's plan for the world and disrupt society; therefore, they oppose God's work. Worldliness is man's focusing on the created, physical features of his being rather than on his spiritual relationship with God. The world is the enemy of God because it competes for man's loyalty and opposes God's plan.

The concept of adultery frequently was used figuratively to describe man's unfaithfulness to God. "Adulterers and adulteresses" in verse 4 may have been used similarly to the Old Testament usage by the prophets, meaning that the people were failing in faithfulness to God. Worldly-minded people are disloyal to God. Man cannot divide his affection between God and those forces in the world which are hostile to God.

The translation of verse 5 is uncertain. Perhaps it should be translated, "Or do you suppose it is in vain that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the Spirit which he has made to dwell in us?'" God has given His Spirit to the Christian, and He is jealous of any rival spirits, such as the spirit of the world, which are harboured in the Christian's life. The particular Scripture which James made reference to has not been identified but appears to sum up a number of passages.

Since God yearns jealously for the Christian in whose heart the Spirit abides, He gives more grace (v. 6). James' elaboration of the bestowing of grace is based on Proverbs 3:34: "Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly."

Pride is a natural endowment of man; it serves as the basic motive for doing his best. Pride becomes perverted, however, when man rejects his creatureliness and assumes that he is as great as God. Humility is the experience of recognizing one's creatureliness and dependence on God. God gives grace to the humble (v. 6). The proud man who walks independently of God may even pray, but he desires God's blessings for his own selfish use. God resists

Write the word which means man's focusing on the created physical features of his being rather than on his spiritual relationship with God. _____

(worldliness)

God has given His _____ to guide Christians; He is jealous of the rival _____ of the world in Christians' lives.

(Spirit, spirit)

What is the opposite of selfish pride?

(humility)

the proud in order to bring them to humility and faith. They are advised to submit themselves to God (v. 7).

The man who refuses to be subject to God is under the control of the devil, who entices man to greater pride and self-interest. As long as man responds to these attitudes, the devil has freedom to accomplish his purpose in the life of the man. If man resists, the devil will flee from him. It is necessary to draw near to God if the devil's control over life is to be broken (v. 8). A life that is turned away from God and focused on the world is vulnerable to the devil. A life which is centred in God experiences fellowship with Him and leaves no place for satanic control. The way to draw near to God is to be cleansed of sins (v. 8). Not only must the life be cleansed of sins already committed, but the heart itself must be purified in order that the life will be controlled by a single and sincere devotion rather than by double-mindedness. Purification of the heart means the replacing of insincere and wrong attitudes with right ones. Affliction, mourning, and weeping are better than laughter which indicates that one takes his sins lightly. Those who have not taken seriously the influence of the devil in their lives need to mourn, to weep, and to have their joy turned to heaviness (v. 9).

When man recognizes his creatureliness and humbles himself, God lifts him up as a son (v. 10). Humility will come only after the gravity of sin has been recognized.

With verse 11, attention returns to the strife within the community. The present imperative verb implies that the evil activity was in progress; therefore, the Christians were to stop speaking evil of one another (v. 11). To speak evil of another means to talk maliciously in his absence in order to influence the opinions of others against him. Such conduct spreads undesirable hostility whether the words being spoken are true or not. The addressing of the readers as brethren emphasized a special relationship which was violated by back-biting. Back-biting grows out of pride and fails to recognize the creaturely nature of every man. To belittle the character of another through slander is man's subtle way of attempting to exalt himself. In addition, he is assuming the role of a judge. The judge should be guided by the Law, which prohibits back-biting. For the judge to speak against his brother is to disregard the Law and to set up his own standard of conduct. It is illogical for a Christian to assume the role of judge (to be critical of his brethren) and then to refuse to abide by the Law which prohibits speaking evil against a brother. To be critical of the Law and to reject it makes it impossible for a person to be a doer of it; he appoints himself as a critic or judge of it. God, who has given the Law, has not appointed man to evaluate it (v. 12). Man's changing it to suit himself

James used "laughter" to indicate that one takes his sins _____.

Instead of laughter over sins, James suggested _____ over sins.

(lightly, mourning)

Christians should not speak evil of one another, which is called back-biting, because:

1. It belittles the _____ of others.
2. It is a person's subtle way of attempting to _____ himself because of _____.
3. It assumes the role of a _____ but disregards the _____.

(character, exalt, pride, judge, Law)

is invalid because God has the power to save or to destroy the man who repudiates His law. Man as creature does not stand in a position to be a judge of God's actions.

Man's Possessions and Holiness

James 4:13-5:6

The folly of man's emphasis on possessions (4:13-17)

Worldliness had caused Christians to plan their lives without considering the will of God. Their attention was consumed with buying, selling, and getting gain (v. 13). Worldliness had caused them to plan their lives as if God did not exist. James reminded them that they were not masters of their destinies (v. 14). The creaturely life of man is very uncertain. James compared it to a vapour (like condensed breath or steam) which can be seen for a brief time and then vanishes away. Man does not control diseases, natural disasters, or accidents. He does not know if he will live to see tomorrow, and he certainly does not know what the coming year holds in store for him. The uncertainty of life speaks to the necessity of man's living according to God's will instead of making his own plans (v. 15). This teaching of James coincides with the parable of Jesus with regard to the rich fool. He focused on planting, harvesting, and storing his goods, but he failed to consider the fact that he might not live to enjoy the fruits of his labour. Man cannot plan and live his life apart from God. His only assurance that life will be secure and worthwhile is to live it according to God's will. Since life is uncertain and death is certain, his only possible security is to place his life in the hands of God and confidently depend on his Creator to sustain him.

Instead of the proud traders' recognizing their dependence on God, they boasted of their independence and self-sufficiency as if they had the power to control their own destinies. James reminded them that such an attitude was evil (v. 16).

The Christian is obligated to make all of life's plans in the light of God's will. The person who fails to follow God's will in every area of life and to live on the basis of that will is guilty of sin (v. 17). To know to walk humbly with God but to ignore to do so is the basis of all sin (see Mic. 6:8).

The effects of riches (5:1-6)

Very few men are able to become wealthy without being degraded by it. Material possessions have a tendency to turn man's eyes away from God to the things of the world. The present emphasis on

Is this statement true or false?

Man is the master of his destiny. _____

(false)

Man's assurance that life will be secure and worthwhile is to live it according to God's _____

(will)

To fail to follow God's will in every area of life is _____.

(sin)

materialism is supported by arguments that the wealth of the world will make men happy. Evil and sin are interpreted as the results of inequitable economic distribution. James did not believe that wealthy men were free of miseries. If their riches brought comfort, it was only temporary for wealth also brought corruption which would result in judgement and condemnation (vv. 1f.).

Material possessions are temporary. The corn and oil which the farmer harvests will rot in due course (v. 2). Multiple expensive garments which are kept in closets for a change of raiment will eventually become moth-eaten. Man's insatiable greed leads to hoarding, but his accumulated possessions deteriorate finally and are of benefit to no one. Because of greed, man labours, saves, and cheats to accumulate wealth of which he is robbed by death.

The miser's gold and silver are of no value to him or anyone else. Paper money is destructible. Most valuables deteriorate whether used or not. Permitting possessions to deteriorate and be of no use to anyone will be used as a witness against the wealthy during the time of judgement (v. 3). The flesh of the miser will be consumed, as it were, by fire like the hoarded possessions were consumed by rust (v. 3). Instead of benefiting self or others, the hoarding and miserly conduct of the rich only heap upon them greater judgement for the last days.

Often wealth was accumulated by cheating labourers out of a just wage (v. 4). Man might get by with fraudulent practices for a while, but he was warned that the cries of the oppressed who reaped the fields were heard by the Lord of "Sabaoth" (of hosts—a description of a mighty army).

James accused the wealthy of the three-fold evil of exploiting employees, living selfishly, and oppressing the righteous. While they cheated the labourers out of just wages, forcing them to live in poverty, the wealthy lived self-indulgent and extravagant lives (v. 5). The life of luxury is sternly denounced in the Bible, especially in the Book of Amos. The view that all men are created in the image of God led to the concept that all have the same right to share in God's created order. For a few to accumulate great wealth while others lived in poverty is contradictory to the doctrine of creation.

James pronounced condemnation upon those whose extravagance resulted in waste. He compared their condition to that of animals which were being fattened for the day of slaughter. The luxury and pampering of the wicked wealthy was preparation for doom which inevitably awaited them (v. 5). They had oppressed the just to the extent of causing their death (v. 6). The poor were unable to offer resistance to the crushing oppression they faced. If one reads the

Underline the correct word or words.
 James believed that wealthy men (were, were not) free of miseries.
 (were not)

Underline the correct word.
 Material possessions are (enduring, temporary).
 (temporary)

What will bring greater judgement on the rich in the last days? _____

 (hoarding and miserly conduct)

Three indictments which were brought by James against wealthy people were:
 1. e _____ employees,
 2. living s _____, and
 3. o _____ the righteous.
 (exploiting, selfishly, oppressing)

statement as a question, the meaning would be that though they are too impotent to offer resistance now, their will to resist will become effective on the day of judgement when they will testify against their oppressors: "Does not the righteous man resist you?" (v. 6).

Man's Beliefs and Holiness

James 5:7-18

Hope in Christ's return establishes patience (5:7-11).

James' reference to the day of slaughter turned his thoughts to the day of judgement when the wicked will give account of their evil deeds before the Lord. Because of their confidence in the coming of the Lord, the oppressed righteous gain strength to endure patiently the evils of this age (v. 7). A farmer must wait a year after the gathering of the old crop for a new harvest. He spends most of the year in toil preparing for the harvest. First, he must prepare the land, then sow, then cultivate it. Confidently he waits for God to send the early and latter rains on which a good harvest depends. He patiently waits because of his hope in an abundant harvest at the appointed time (v. 7). James assured his readers, who waited patiently, that the coming of the Lord drew near (v. 8). By strengthening their hearts with this hope, they would be able to endure afflictions and to refrain from retaliation.

The Christians also need patience towards God, who does not vindicate His faithful people immediately. Too often patience is lost, and Christians assume the role of God as judge.

Jesus had warned His disciples that their mission in the world would not be easy; however, they were to be faithful to the end. The Day of Yahweh, which was a day of judgement, took on a new dimension with Jesus' promise to come again and to bring the present evil age to a close. At that time, the wicked will be judged and the righteous rewarded. The end of toil, oppression, and persecution will come at his Parousia. The Christians were instructed to wait patiently for the coming of the Lord, which was not too far in the future.

Under the stress of affliction and persecution, people tend to blame one another for their miseries. However, James exhorted his readers to refrain from doing so (v. 9). Determining who is really at fault rests ultimately with the Judge, that is, with God who will judge the world through Christ. Since the coming of the Lord was anticipated to be near, the Christians were reminded that "the judge standeth before the door" (v. 9). James implied that judgement was connected with the return of Christ.

The oppressed righteous gain strength through their confidence in the coming of the _____.

(Lord)

Is this statement true or false?

James compared the hope of the oppressed righteous to the farmer's hope of abundant harvest. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

*At the coming of the Lord, called Parousia, the _____ will come to a close;
the _____ will be judged;
the _____ will be rewarded.*

(present age, wicked, righteous)

Rather than murmuring against one another, Christians should remember that the prophets patiently suffered affliction for the name of the Lord. Jeremiah is a prime example of one who was persecuted by his own king and people because he denounced the conditions in Judah and warned the people and king to repent. Instead of heeding his warnings concerning the approaching Babylonian army, Jeremiah's words were rejected and he was cast into prison. He remained faithful to the Word of the Lord even though it brought affliction. His example of patience should be followed by Christians.

Another classic example of patience in the midst of suffering is Job (v. 11). The plight of Job ended in the restoration of more abundant possessions than had been lost. Job's experience proves that those who endure are blessed. After his loss of family and children, his patience was tried by his friends and even by his wife who suggested that he curse God and die. Job continued to trust God, however, and in the end the Lord blessed him greatly.

The New Testament reveals that God's blessings and judgement do not come fully during life in this evil world. The time for full vindication of the righteous and condemnation of the wicked will come at the Day of Yahweh. Jesus related the Day of Yahweh to His own return when the present world order will be brought to an end and His Kingdom will be consummated. His disciples were exhorted to remain faithful to the end. In emphasizing patience on the basis of hope in the return of Christ, James was following the teachings of Jesus: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:12-13).

Christian convictions prohibit swearing (5:12)

James followed the teachings of Jesus recorded in Matthew 5:35f. in rejecting the custom of swearing. The traditions of the Pharisees provided for binding and non-binding oaths in the name of God or a substitute for the name of God. Men tend to express oaths during times of impatience and relaxed self-control. Some oaths of the Pharisees were frivolous and were sworn by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, or by one's head. Such oaths, which did not actually mention the name of God, were not binding according to the Pharisees. Jesus took the position that a man's word should be dependable. The Christian should simply answer 'yes' or 'no' without having to reinforce his word with an oath. Oaths are for people who are dishonest, but if they are dishonest their oaths are worthless. Christians are to be pure in heart; therefore, they are not to be double-tongued. A person whose word is not dependable will fall into condemnation (v. 12).



Which Old Testament character is a classic example that enduring afflictions and losses results in being blessed? _____

(Job)

When will full vindication of the righteous and condemnation of the wicked take place?

(at the Day of Yahweh)

Write the following words under the appropriate headings to contrast James' teachings concerning oaths of Pharisees and oaths as related to Christians.

<i>honest</i>	<i>deceitful</i>
<i>frivolous</i>	<i>dependable</i>
<u><i>Pharisees' oaths</i></u>	<u><i>Christians' words</i></u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

(Pharisees' oaths--frivolous, deceitful, Christians' words--honest, dependable)

The prayer of faith is effective (5:13-18)

Paul instructed the Thessalonians to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). James conveyed the same meaning when he instructed the afflicted to pray to God rather than to murmur and to blame their fellowman for their troubles (v. 13). On the other hand, the merry should sing psalms. Singing and praying go together since both are verbal expressions to God. Both are outgrowths of gratitude, but prayer includes additional motives. It may express need and concern.

Prayer during affliction accomplishes two purposes:

1. It redirects the attention of the one praying from himself to his Lord, who suffered much greater affliction than any of His people.
2. It prepares the heart to receive God's grace, whereby the afflicted person is strengthened and is enabled to withstand the trials.

God does not always promise to remove physical afflictions when we pray; however, He answers every prayer of the righteous. Sometimes our greatest need is not to have comfort restored to our bodies but our faith strengthened. Faith lays hold of God's promises concerning the future. Hope in these promises, which is made real by the indwelling Spirit, gives inner strength by which to endure physical suffering. On other occasions, God does remove the cause of physical affliction.

Prayer should not be limited to times of distress. Since prayer is communion with God, man should pray during prosperity as well as during trials. Prayer is talking with God. Often Christians forget to express gratitude to God for His blessings when they no longer feel threatened and in need of divine help. To neglect to express gratitude results in life becoming out of focus. Man begins to conclude that the good fortune which has come his way has been earned by his own achievement. By singing psalms, he expresses recognition that God has been his Benefactor (v. 13).

The source of affliction may be sickness, and the believer should call the elders of the Church and have them to pray for him (v. 14). James stated that prayer for the sick might be accompanied by anointing with oil in the name of the Lord Jesus. Anointing with oil was an external symbol which was used ceremonially to point out God's Messiah and to consecrate Him to God's will. The anointing with oil of Israel's leaders symbolized publicly that the Spirit of God had come upon them to qualify them for God's service. Sometimes the ceremony included the laying on of hands which symbolized the transferring of spiritual power to

Can you write in your own words the two purposes accomplished by prayer during affliction? Use the clues below to help you.

1. (self, Lord) _____

2. (grace, strength) _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Christians should remember to pray during _____ as well as during _____.

(prosperity, trials)

the life of the newly consecrated. In the first century, oil was used also as a medicine. The Good Samaritan, who found the wounded Jew by the roadside, poured oil and wine into his wounds before binding them up. Perhaps James was suggesting that the anointing with oil was a medicinal practice; however, it is possible that it was part of a ceremony which accompanied prayer. The anointing with oil was to be in the name of the Lord. The name of a person represented his power. The name of the Lord represented the authority of Christ; therefore, the actual healing which took place was by the power and authority of Jesus Christ.

The Roman Catholic Church uses verse 14 to justify the sacrament of Extreme Unction. The sacrament includes the ceremony of the priest's anointing the eyes, ears, nostrils, hands, and feet of a sick person who is considered to be near death. The consecrated oil is supposed to be an effective medium of forgiveness in case the sick person can no longer make conscious confession of sins. The Catholic Church translates the word 'elder' as 'priest' in order to justify this sacrament by the Catholic priesthood.

The doctrine of Extreme Unction is based on misinterpretations of the verse at a number of points. The emphasis of the verse is not an anointing but prayer. Anointing accompanied prayers rather than being the central nature of the ceremony. There is no indication that the oil was consecrated. The healing did not come from the anointing with oil but from the authority and by the power of the Lord whose name was invoked. Illness is usually a time of spiritual distress, and the assembling of the elders to pray over the sick person brought consolation and strength by supporting him and renewing his confidence in the Lord. The verse does not teach that a ceremony of the Church, which includes anointing with oil, can mechanically bring healing, prolonging of life, or removal of sins. In fact, the prayer and anointing with oil were not in anticipation of the death of the person as the sacrament of Extreme Unction is, but they gave confidence of recovery (v. 15).

Prayer is talking with God. Such communion results in a more pointed awareness of God's presence. What the sick person needs most is to have his confidence in God's presence and power renewed. The God who created him and sustains him has not forsaken him during the time of sickness. The same Lord who gave him life in the beginning is able to raise him and restore him to the strength of life (v. 15). Such an awareness of God's presence will lead to the confession and forgiveness of sins which have been committed (v. 15).

Man does not die apart from the permissive will of God. If God has further work for the Christian

Anointing the sick with oil was a _____ practice; it also could have represented Christ's _____ in actual _____.

(medicinal, authority, healing)

Read paragraphs 2 and 3 before doing the following exercise.

INTERPRETATION OF JAMES 5:14

Roman Catholic sacrament of Extreme Unction

1. Emphasis on _____
2. Consecrated _____
3. Oil as effective medium of _____
4. Ceremony of the _____
5. Done in anticipation of _____

Teachings of the verse

1. Emphasis on _____
2. No indication of _____ oil
3. Healing by _____ of the Lord
4. Ceremony of _____ cannot remove sins.
5. Prayer and anointing with oil gave confidence of _____.

(Extreme Unction--anointing, oil, forgiveness, church, death. Verse--prayer, consecrated, power, church, recovery)

Prayer causes a sick person to become more aware of God's _____.

One's renewed awareness of God's presence and power leads to _____ and to _____ of sins.

(presence, confession, forgiveness)

to do (as in the case of Paul), He is able to restore his body to strength ("raise him up"—v. 15).

Verse 16 has been used to support the Catholic doctrine of confession to priests. The verse actually states that Christians should confess their faults to one another, not to an authorized officer of the Church. The total Christian life should be an attitude of confession. The believer is a sinner who has found acceptance from God because of God's mercy and love and not because of his own goodness.

The opposite of confessing faults is denial of sinfulness. The resulting attitude of the latter is that one deserves to be accepted by God. This attitude leads to spiritual pride and superficial piety in which the person thinks he is better than others. When he confesses his faults, he is recognizing and "saying with" God that he is a sinner and undeserving of the Lord's blessings.

James instructed his readers to confess their sins and to pray for one another in order that they might be healed (v. 16). The Jews believed that sickness was related to sin. It was believed that illness was a punishment sent by God upon the unrighteous. Jesus taught that this doctrine was not absolutely true, since the man born blind was not being punished for his parents' sins nor for sins which he had committed himself (see John 9). Nevertheless, the health of the physical body is related closely to the condition of the soul. Many physical ailments today result from anxieties which grow out of tensions related to sin. For the person to experience genuine forgiveness removes the tension and results in the disappearance of the physical ailment. In addition, God who created man's body from the dust of the earth has the power to restore it to strength.

James stated that the prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects (v. 16). The prayers of the righteous differ from those of others by virtue of their earnestness and fervency. The man who walks uprightly with God prays in a manner acceptable to Him. An example of the effectiveness of a righteous man's prayer is that of Elijah on Mount Carmel (v. 17). After the Israelites had turned to idol worship, Elijah prayed that it would not rain in order to expose the weakness of the fertility idols (an interpretation of 1 Kings 17:1). The fact that it did not rain for three and a half years gave support to Elijah's claim that he worshipped the true God. The test was not complete until Elijah prayed again and heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit (vv. 17-18). The test, based on the withholding and sending of rain, was not to honour Elijah nor to attribute to him power over rain but to support his faith in God. Other Israelites worshipped idols. They had turned from Yahweh because they considered the fertility idols to be superior. Elijah was faithful to Yahweh and proclaimed the power and the uprightness of his God. In order to support

Is this statement true or false?

Christians are to confess their faults because they are sinners who have found acceptance from God through His mercy and love. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Refusal to confess faults leads to spiritual p_____.

(pride)

The health of the _____ is related closely to the condition of the _____.

(physical body, soul)

The prayer of the righteous is effective because of its e_____ and a_____ with God.

(earnestness, acceptability)

his preaching that Yahweh is the only God, Elijah's God sent the rain. By this action, the people knew that Elijah served the true God and they were in error. The prayer of faith for the sick is a witness to the power and goodness of the Lord whom the sick person worships and to whom his friends pray. God manifests His goodness and glory by raising the sick.

Helping One Another to Be Holy

James 5:19-20

The last two verses of the epistle are connected loosely to the previous section by the subject of prayer. Probably James was implying that Christian brothers are obligated to pray for those who wander from the truth (v. 19). If a brother is diverted from the doctrines of the faith which he embraced at his conversion, his brothers in Christ are responsible for turning him back ("convert him").

Perhaps the truth which James had in mind related primarily to those doctrines upon which moral conduct is based. The condition of the Christian who strays from the truth is described generally as 'back-sliding'. Christians are their brothers' keepers with the responsibility of helping them grow in their understanding of Christian obligations and in their preparation for Christian service.

Whoever turns a sinner back from the error of his way does an important work (v. 20). It is very serious for a believer to turn aside into sin and to exist in a condition of back-sliding. James stated that whoever turns him back from sin will save him from death (v. 20). Perhaps death means the harm which sin brings to the soul rather than the ultimate destruction of the lost and condemned. One who helps his brother turn from a wayward life delivers him from the deadly results of his sins. To "cover a multitude of sins" means that the sins will be forgiven. Probably the sins referred to are those of the wayward brother who has turned from the truth. If he is led to abandon his waywardness, he will receive forgiveness of his sins.

"Convert" in James 5:19 means the turning back to truth of a Christian who has been diverted from the _____ of the faith.

(doctrines)

In James 5:20--

"death" means the _____ that _____ brings to the soul;

"hide sins" means _____.

(harm, sin, forgiveness)

Home Study Exercise

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

1. Why did James not recommend most to be teachers? _____

2. Interpret James 3:2. _____

3. Explain how the tongue involves the whole person. _____

4. Give two ways a person reveals his nature. _____
5. Compare a life controlled from above with a life controlled by feelings and selfish ambitions.

6. What is the source of strife? _____
7. What happens when lust and covetousness control one's life? _____

8. Why do many Christians ask amiss? _____

9. Define worldliness. _____

10. Interpret James 4:5. _____

11. Why did James suggest mourning rather than laughter? _____

12. Give three reasons Christians should not engage in back-biting. _____

13. Why is it folly for man to emphasize the gaining of wealth? _____

14. Did James agree that possessions bring happiness? _____. Explain. _____

15. Name three accusations James made against the wealthy. _____

16. What gives encouragement to the oppressed righteous, and how did James illustrate this point?

17. What will happen at the Parousia? _____

18. What can Christians learn from the example of Job? _____

19. Why did James denounce oaths? _____

20. Give two purposes to be accomplished by the prayer of the afflicted. _____

21. Why were the sick anointed with oil? _____

22. How does the doctrine of Extreme Unction misinterpret James 5:14? _____

23. Why does forgiveness of sin accompany the prayer of faith for the sick? _____

24. Why should one confess his faults? _____

25. Why is the prayer of the righteous effective? _____

26. What is the meaning of "convert" in James 5:19? _____

27. Interpret "shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

Read pages 107-115 in Bowman and answer the following questions.

1. Describe the types of wisdom which come from two sources.
2. What warning and advice did James give to the practical materialists?

3. What evidences are there that James believed the Lord's coming was near?
4. How does Bowman interpret 5:19-20?

Advanced activity (Level 3):

Read pages 72-144 in The General Epistle of James by Tasker and answer the following questions.

1. Why did James warn his readers against being teachers and why did he compare the tongue to a fire?
2. Describe the wisdom which comes from two possible sources.
3. How does Tasker interpret "ye kill" in 4:2?
4. Give Tasker's interpretation of 4:5.
5. What was James' warning and advice to the materialists?
6. Why did James condemn the rich?
7. How did James relate the doctrine of the second coming to his ethical teachings?
8. According to Tasker, what was the purpose of anointing the sick with oil?

Seminar Discussion

1. Why did James give so much emphasis to the controlling of the tongue?
2. What are the two sources of wisdom, and what are the characteristics of the wisdom from each source?
3. What is wrong with most Christian praying?
4. What was James' attitude towards the rich and why did he hold that attitude?
5. How does the Christian hope in Christ's return relate to ethical living?
6. What is the benefit of prayer for the sick?
7. How does the Catholic doctrine of Extreme Unction misinterpret the prayer and the anointing of the sick?
8. What is the meaning of James 5:19-20?