

Manifesting Genuine Christianity

Practical Lessons
From The
Book Of James

Effective Expositions

From The
Preaching And Teaching Ministry
Of

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Introduction:

I sincerely love the Word of God. The truth of the Bible not only brings us to God's plan of salvation for us through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but it also provides practical help for living our lives here on earth as believers. There is probably no more practical book in all of the Bible than the Book Of James. This book describes for us in every chapter how we as born-again children of God should live day by day, and if we do live the way we should, we will "Manifest Genuine Christianity" for others to see, and these people will see that we are genuine and not hypocrites. In fact **James 2:24** we find these words, "**Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.**" When Martin Luther saw this verse hundreds of years ago in the scripture, his first reaction was to try and strip the book of James from the canon of scripture. Why? Because he had read in Romans where we are justified by faith alone. He called the Book of James a "straw epistle". In other words, he didn't think the truth of James agreed with the Book of Romans which stated that we are justified by faith only. But the truth that Martin Luther missed was that we are justified by God by faith, and then we are justified before men by our works. In other words, we are to so live once we are saved that others will see that we are genuine believers. Thus, this is the theme of James.

Now, I want us to conduct our detailed study of this letter by digging into each of the five chapters of this blessed book by prayerfully seeking to discover what God is trying to show us. It deserves our very best efforts. So, let's really get started in this study and learn some great truths that will be applicable to our lives, and then let's apply these truths to each of our lives so that we will be richer for the time spent in this effort. May we ask God for the illumination of His Holy Spirit as we dig into this gold mine of God.

One more final note! I want to ask all of you to read the Book of James several times as we study this precious book together. We should never study about the Bible without studying the actual scripture verses themselves. So, be faithful and read James and see what he is saying to you as you learn what he was saying to the early dispersed church!

Lesson 1

“Evidence Of Genuine Christianity”

Scripture: James 1:1-27

Introduction

Most of us know someone who professes to be saved and know Jesus Christ, but yet his or her life doesn't give evidence of having real salvation. It could be that this person is truly saved and just living in a backslidden condition, but it surely is possible that this individual is not even saved at all. The truth is that when a person really comes to know Jesus Christ as personal Savior, there will definitely be genuine evidence that he or she is saved. This person's life will manifest a genuine testimony that Christ has truly changed his or her life within. The Bible says in **II Corinthians 5:17**, **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things become new.”** So, as we enter into this study for today, I want us to concentrate on the need to discover how we can really show evidence of genuine Christianity.

And, I need to tell you that this Epistle of James was written by James, the half-brother of our Lord, and that it is probably the earliest letter written to the early church. It was written to those saved Jews who had to flee Jerusalem after the persecution of the church came to the capitol city. This exodus was called the Diaspora and the letter was hopefully an encouragement to those who were struggling with fear, weakness, and even the propensity to quit and give up in their Christian faith. It is my prayer that during these weeks of study in James that we will be encouraged, inspired, and come to learn what it takes to give a clear testimony that we are saved, even in a world that often rejects us and the message of Christ. Hopefully, this study will give us some practical assistance in really standing for Jesus in a day, just like the early church, when the message of Christ is being rejected by so many. Now, let's look at the verses in this chapter one by one and discover the gold mine of truth in this first chapter of James.

I. WE GIVE EVIDENCE OF GENUINE CHRISTIANITY BY UNDERGOING TRIALS. vs. 1-4

I need to explain what I am talking about in this point before we move on to an actual discussion of these verses. It is a known fact that all believers will face an enormous amount of trials and suffering during his or her lifetime. Sometimes Satan attacks us to hurt us, but we must remember that he can only do what Jesus will allow. This was really attested in the life of Job. At other times, Jesus just brings trials our way in order to test us and make us stronger in Him. In fact, we know that Jesus has determined that we should be conformed to His image, and thus this would be impossible unless we face trials.

The question now comes, "How will we handle the trials that come our way?" The truth is that if we handle the trials well, we will give evidence of really being saved, and we will give glory to Jesus in spite of the difficulties we bear.

A. Notice the proper reaction to our trials. vs. 1-4

In these first four verses we will learn why Jesus allows us to face trials, and we will see what He is trying to do by allowing us to go through these terrible difficulties.

The letter starts with a salutation telling the readers that the writer is indeed James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. James could have talked about his position as the brother of Jesus and being brought up in the same home with Jesus, but obviously James had lost some of his toughness which was demonstrated earlier in the ministry of Jesus, and now he is humble and happy to be a servant of God because he has come to know who Jesus really is.

This first verse also tells the readers who he wants to read this letter. He has addressed the letter to the scattered twelve tribes who have been run out of Jerusalem because of their faith in Christ Himself. And, just like today, no doubt the suffering people were asking many questions about why they were going through so much. The message of this letter starts

out to try and help the discouraged people to deal with the huge problems they were facing. But, we must remember that God often never tells us why, but He often shows us what He is doing in our lives through our trials.

In verse two of our text, James tells the believers that they should count it all joy when they fall into various trials or testings. I must say that this is not very easy to do when you are still in the pain of the bad experience or suffering the scars of the difficulty. Yet, God can help turn the suffering into rejoicing and the gloom into glory as we work our way through these experiences. The idea of falling into these trials seems to imply that we have stumbled and gotten caught in our own snare. Yet as I mentioned earlier, Satan may have set the trap, and Jesus certainly knew that we would fall into the snare. Therefore, whatever we face, Jesus is there to help us face it. So, we can indeed rejoice to know that some way things will turn out well.

B. Notice the personal reason for our trials. v. 3

Verse three tells us that God let's us go through trials and testings in order to teach us patience.

C. Notice the perfect results of our trials. v. 4

And in verse four, we are admonished to not give up so quickly for patience takes quite a while. The perfect work here refers to God bringing us to a new level of maturity in our Christian lives. The idea of entire and wanting nothing is referring to our satisfaction and peace which we have, even in the midst of the storm. I surely will rejoice when I see modern Christians wanting nothing! The idea is that God won't allow you to go without everything you could possibly need.

II. IT IS EVIDENCED BY UNWAVERING TRUST. vs. 5-8

Let me ask you, "How much do you trust God?" Do you trust Him when things go bad, or do you just trust Him when things are going well. Do

you trust Him when you don't know what to do? Well, I assure you that God is ready to give us the wisdom we need in whatever circumstance we are in, if we will trust Him completely.

A. Notice the object of this trust. v. 5a

In verse five we are told that if we need Divine wisdom to help us deal with the trials and tests in our lives, then we should admit that we don't have it and go to Jesus and ask Him for that wisdom. He alone is the object of our trust. I think we need to know that "knowledge is knowing what to do", and "wisdom" is knowing how to do what we know we should do". It is very important that we learn to differentiate because to do the right thing in a wrong way always results in more difficulty. And, I need to point out that in this verse, God has promised to be liberal in giving to us the wisdom that we need. In other words, He will not hold back anything that we need to know how to face whatever we have to face. Not one thing!

B. Notice the outcome of this trust. v. 5b

This verse says that if we seek wisdom from God that He will give it to us and "upbraid us not". This means that He will not embarrass us because we have asked for His wisdom. What a tremendous promise God has given to us in this verse. Now, we must claim what He has promised us and not be reluctant to do so. The outcome of a confident trust in God will produce what we are asking Him for and we will not be belittled by God for asking.

C. Notice the operation of this trust. vs. 6-7

But, there is a condition we must meet if we are going to get wisdom from God. In verse six we are told that if we ask for wisdom from God during times of trials that we must ask in faith and not waver. To not waver is to not doubt or be skeptical about what we have asked for. Or, in other words, we must ask for wisdom by faith with the confidence that God will give it and we must move ahead by faith and act upon what we have requested

just as if we already had the prayer answered. To do otherwise is like a wave of the sea that goes in and out according to the wind which drives it. We cannot waver in our belief if we are going to expect God to grant our prayers for wisdom.

Verse seven reminds us that a double-minded man who goes back and forth like the waves of the sea in the wind absolutely will not receive what he asks for. To do so is to doubt the integrity of God Who has promised to fulfill His promises. Thus, a tremendous amount of responsibility for our answered prayers is laid upon us because if we have a skeptical faith, God will not answer our prayers. So, if we need wisdom from God while we are going through the testings and storms of life, we must believe with sincerity and trust our Lord completely to do what He has promised. Otherwise, we will remain without His wisdom. We must remember that the operation of our trust in God is not dependent upon how much faith we have, but it is determined by the integrity and character of the One Whom we pray to!

D. Notice the obvious from this trust. v. 8

In verse eight we find the sure instability of the one who is double minded. This individual vacillates back and forth between faith and a lack of faith. Thus, there is no stability in the life of an individual like this. We must be careful that we are not double minded when we pray to God, and also in our commitment to Christ. The obvious result of a vacillating faith is no answer to our requests!

III. IT IS EVIDENCED BY UNDERSTANDING TREASURE. vs. 9-11

How are we as believers going to convince others that our faith is genuine? We must show to others that we have been transformed by the power of God by demonstrating the proper value system. This value system is completely different from the world, and most of the time is not understood by the world. When we prioritize our lives with spiritual things and eternity as the emphasis or focus of our lives, then we will indeed be misunderstood by the world, but yet we

will give evidence by our lifestyle that we have been changed by the new birth.

A. One must understand what true treasure is. v. 9

What is true treasure? Well, I can assure you that it is not the money and materialism of this world! True treasure is that which pertains to the Kingdom of God and eternity. It is knowing that you are really saved and that you have a passionate heart to see others saved. True treasure is a life that is changed, a suffering child that is ministered to in the name of Jesus, and it is showing compassion while making a difference as described in Jude, verse 22. And, it is sending souls on to heaven by our witness and investment in eternity. The passion and greatest emphasis in our lives will give evidence to who we really are and that we have either truthfully been saved, or that we still are lost and cherish this world. Simply put, knowing Jesus Christ intimately is true riches. Verse nine says that even the lowest brother with nothing can rejoice because Christ has exalted him. When we come to Jesus, everybody is truly a somebody.

B. One must understand how temporal treasure is. vs. 10-11

In these two verses we are reminded by James that even a rich man really has nothing that is permanent because today he may be wealthy and tomorrow have lost everything. Just like a flower and the grass, it is here today and gone tomorrow. Therefore, in order to discover what is true treasure, we must come to understand that everything apart from our relationship with Jesus is temporary; here today and gone tomorrow! Thus, we must get our value system right and begin to measure everything we have and everything we do in view of eternity.

Let me use a story that I heard about many years ago to illustrate the importance of getting our value system right. Years ago I read a story about a legend in the Swiss Alps about a shepherd boy who was one day out in the mountainside watching his sheep. As he watched over his sheep, he picked a little flower from the ground. When he picked up the flower, a

cave opened up to him in the side of the mountain. He left his sheep and cautiously walked to the mouth of the cave and looked in. There in the cave was a huge pile of gold and silver, plus many other kinds of jewels and gems. He laid the flower on the ground as he walked into the cave and started touching the jewels and gems. As he was looking at this huge amount of wealth, a little old man walked from behind the treasure and said to him, "Take all you want but don't forget the best". So, the shepherd boy started filling his robe and wrap with all that he could carry. When he had collected all that he could carry, he turned and walked joyfully out of the cave, leaving the flower lying on the ground inside. After he walked out of the cave opening, the cave entrance closed up with the flower and treasure left inside. And, as he started to walk away from the cave, all of the treasure he had collected turned to dust. But now, the key to the mountain was inside and he had forgotten the best.

Folks, this is the way it is in our lives. Jesus Christ is the key to the mountain and if we lay Him down and attempt to just gather our riches, soon thereafter, all of our treasure will turn to dust and we will not be able to go into where the permanent treasure is. Now, with this little legend, can you see the importance of not forgetting the best. Jesus is the best, and if we forget Him and do our own thing trying to accumulate all of the treasure that we can carry, it soon will turn to dust and we will have missed the key to eternal life. Now, let me ask you, "Have you laid down the best to pick up the treasure that will turn to dust?" I pray that you have genuinely been saved, and that you have a value system that gives evidence that you have real Christianity.

IV. IT IS EVIDENCED BY UTILIZING TEMPTATION. vs. 12-18

Beloved, have you ever learned any lessons from testings and temptations? I know that I have learned a tremendous amount from trials and even the temptations of the flesh. The trials and temptations are not pleasant, but when we learn from them what God wants us to learn, then they can become valuable to us. And, when we handle trials and fleshly temptations properly and come out on the other side victorious,

then we can display genuine evidence that we really are saved and that Jesus lives in our hearts. The next few verses will deal with how to deal with our trials and temptations and come through them victorious.

A. Notice the promise for utilizing temptation. v. 12

In verse twelve, James tell us that the person who comes through trials and temptations victoriously will be blessed and happy. And, he is promised that if he is faithful and faces the trials and temptations with courage and strength, that God will reward him with the crown of life. In other words, all of those believers who withstand the trials and tests of life and remain faithful, will be rewarded with eternal life. Therefore, we are being reminded by James who is writing to suffering people that our trials and tests here are nothing compared to the rewards of eternal life that we will receive over there. So, let's stand strong and faithful, and let's live our lives looking beyond the present circumstances until that day when there will be no more trials or suffering. We must make our trials here on earth blessings from God to mature us in the Lord as we keep our eyes on the crown of life to come.

B. Notice the perception for utilizing temptation. vs. 13-15

Who do you blame when fleshly temptation comes your way? Do you blame Satan, another person, or even God? In these three verses we learn some tremendous truth about the temptation that comes to everyone of us as believers. And, I want to say that when we withstand the fleshly temptation that comes our way, then we feel so victorious and we are strengthened even more for the next temptation.

In verse thirteen, we are admonished to not blame God for the evil temptation that comes our way. In fact, God doesn't tempt any believer with evil, and neither is He tempted by any man. In fact, verse 14 tells us that we are tempted when we are drawn away of our own lusts and succumb to the enticement of others or Satan. In other words, we must choose to give in to temptation if we commit this sin. No one forces us to sin, but we make

a bad decision and capitulate to the seductions of the flesh.

Verse 15 tells us that when we allow our lusts to get out of control with temptation, then sin is conceived and when this sin becomes full grown, then it brings forth death; both physical and spiritual death. Sometimes it even brings forth the death of others as in the case of murder, manslaughter, etc. As someone has said: "Sin will take you farther than you want to go, cost you more than you want to pay, keep you longer than you want to stay". But, there is the promise that we can overcome the temptation we face if we will perceive where temptation comes from and truly flee from it.

C. Notice the power for utilizing temptation. vs. 16-17

Verse 16 starts out by warning us that we don't have to submit to temptation, and when we do, we are committing a tremendous mistake which will be costly. But, according to verse 17, God only brings us good gifts and He never changes. This truth that God never changes is called His immutability. We need to remember the meaning of this big word. It is a reminder that with a changeless God Who breaks no promises, we can face whatever temptation we might face. We just need to depend upon Him to resist the temptation and turn the temptation into a blessing. The power for overcoming temptation is found in a changeless God.

D. Notice the pattern for utilizing temptation. v. 18

This verse 18 is a marvelous scripture. It tells us that the requirement for us to overcome temptation is not a harsh requirement that Christ knew nothing about, because He was tempted in like manner as we are and never sinned. He set the example for us in overcoming temptation. And, according to this verse, He willed that we use His word to find victory over sin and set our own pattern as the first fruits of those who find victory over temptation. Therefore, we don't need to sit around and feel sorry for ourselves and blame God and others for our sin, but we should claim the promised power of God found in His word and

withstand the evil one who brings temptation to us. May I ask you, “What kind of pattern or example are you setting for your children and grandchildren when it comes to overcoming your temptation”? Maybe you should spend some time here renewing your commitment to be a better example. Just remember, the entire theme of this Book of James is “Manifesting Genuine Christianity”. Are you doing this by the way you overcome your fleshly temptation?

V. IT IS EVIDENCED BY UNCOVERING TRUTH. vs. 19-27

These last verses in Chapter One are truly some profound verses to help us show evidence of genuine Christianity. In reality, they take the truth of living an exemplary life to manifest that we are real or genuine, and they reveal the practical aspect of living day to day for Jesus. The truth that God gives us through James in these verses may sting just a little bit, because James doesn't mince any words. He would not be classified as a warm fuzzy preacher or a Plexiglas pastor in this generation. Let's take a look at these remaining verses.

A. Please notice that this truth offers caution. vs. 19-20

Verses 19-20 deal with the truth of living a life with the proper attitude and actions which will demonstrate that you are a genuine born again believer. James tell us that we should be quicker to hear and listen than we are to speak. And, that we should be slow to speak and slow to get angry. So, he is giving us a good practical precaution so that we can remain under control and display a righteous testimony. He states in verse 20 that our anger will never produce the righteousness of God. My friends, all of us need to realize this! Sometimes it is easy for us when we are going through trials as were these Jewish believers, to lose our patience and in the process, ruin our testimony. May we learn to not do this!

B. Please notice that this truth offers cleanliness. v. 21

Verse 21 is an admonition to conduct our lives in a righteous way. James tell us that we should not be overflowing with ill-will

and malice seeking revenge toward others, but instead we should have a teachable spirit and receive the word of God with an open heart so that it will find a place in our lives to be rooted. And then, the last phrase reminds us that salvation is only through the word of God.

What James is trying to get across to the Jewish believers and to us today is that instead of fighting others and trying to overcome those who oppose us, we should live a Godly lifestyle and open our lives to the truth of the word of God. In other words, our lives should be cleaned up so that others will see that we are indeed genuine in our faith.

C. Please notice that this truth offers compulsion. vs. 22-25

What is the truth that James is trying to get across to us in these verses? Without a doubt, he is trying to get the early church and us today to be doers of the word as well as hearers. In verse 22, he tells the people to avoid self-deception and obey the word. He is saying that the truth of God's word should compel us to put into practice what we learn from the word. We must avoid reading and hearing the word, and then going away as if God didn't show us what to do. It would be like looking into a mirror and seeing what we look like, and then going away and forgetting what we saw. But instead, we should see ourselves as we really are in the word of God, and act upon what God has shown us about ourselves. We should be honest with our assessment after God's word has convicted us, and we should take action to change our behavior. If we do these things, then James says in verse 25, that we will be happy in the Lord. Without a doubt, obedience brings peace and happiness.

D. Please notice that this truth offers control. v. 26

Verse 26 tells us that if we respond correctly to the word of God, we will be able with the power of God to keep our lives under control and show that we really do belong to Jesus. We will keep our tongues bridled and our demeanor will be genuine and not in vain. There is no room for phoniness when the truth of the word

of God reveals who and what we really are.

E. Please notice that this truth offers compassion. v. 27

We now come to the very last verse of Chapter One. This has been a terrific study about showing real evidence of genuine Christianity. However, there is just one more admonition that James gives to the early church and also to us. If we are going to display authentic religion as he calls it, then we must show real compassion to orphans and widows because they are suffering. And, if we are really desirous of presenting our own testimonies in the proper way, then we also must love ourselves enough to keep our lives unspotted from the world. This means that we must live our lives in such a way as to be beyond reproach by the world at large, and that we will be free of vice and corruption.

Conclusion:

We now come to the end of our study of Chapter One. I do pray that God has spoken to your heart about many things. However, I just want to use the content of this lesson to ask you some questions that hopefully you will answer truthfully and then respond accordingly in order for you to have your life changed to give you a testimony of genuine Christianity.

1. How do you respond to the trials that you encounter in life?
2. Have you learned patience from the trials you have gone through?
3. How often do you ask God for wisdom as you live your life?
4. Would you consider yourself to be a double minded person?
5. Who do you blame when you submit to temptation?
6. Do you have a sin in your life that you need to get the victory over?
7. Do you have a problem with a runaway tongue?
8. How do you respond to the sermons that you hear?

9. Are you a doer of the word or just a hearer only?

10. Would you say that at this time you have pure religion and undefiled?

Lesson 2

“The Expression Of Genuine Christianity”

Scripture: James 2:1-26

Introduction

Today we are studying our second lesson in the Book of James. In our last study we spent much time in Chapter One. We did not get nearly finished with Chapter One, but we did cover some very fruitful verses, and hopefully we were able to glean a lot of practical truth for our lives. In addition, I pray that you answered the questions at the end of our first lesson, and hopefully, God used that lesson on showing “Evidence Of Genuine Christianity” to encourage you to make sure that you have an authentic testimony and that there is no hypocrisy in your life. We must remember that some people will never read the Bible before they read our lives. Please make sure that everywhere you go that you provide genuine evidence that you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

In this second chapter we are going to study two ways that we can express or demonstrate our genuine Christianity. We have twenty-six verses to cover, but if we can't complete all of these verses, I do pray that you will do your homework and glean from these twenty-six verses the practical truth that God is trying to show us. Now, open your Bible and open your heart as we dig into this wonderful gold mine of God. Let Jesus challenge you from the text, but more important, let Him change you.

I. GENUINE CHRISTIANITY IS EXPRESSED WITH IMPARTIAL WORSHIP. vs. 1-13

We start out our verse by verse exegesis of Chapter Two by talking again about a practical demonstration and expression of lifestyle of genuine Christianity. And, believe it or not, the first thing that is mentioned is how we treat those who come into our worship services. The truth that is being taught in these next few verses is that we should love everyone from every class of people, and that we should not show

partiality or favor to certain people because they are rich or wealthy, and that we must treat poor people with the same respect that we do for those who come to our assembly with evidence of wealth.

A. Notice the delight of this impartial worship. vs. 1-5

1. Impartial worship honors the Savior. v. 1

Verse one is a wonderful verse. It tells us that if we have true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we will not show respect of persons or partiality because our desire is to treat others the same way that Jesus treats us. We will be determined to follow the example of our Lord and treat those who come into our worship services with much respect regardless of their class, their clan, their race, or their culture. We will love them, share Christ with them, and we will treat all of them in a kind compassionate way. And I would like to say that we never show genuine compassion to anyone if we minister to only those who can reciprocate back to us. A rich man can, but a poor man cannot. Therefore, we must honor the Savior by our concern for men and women from every tribe, race, ethnic group, class, and culture.

2. Impartial worship heartens the sufferer. vs. 2-3

In verses two and three, we are told by James that if we have rich people come into our services with their gold rings and their fine clothing, we are not to give them a special place to sit while we have the poor go stand in the corner or sit on the floor. There is a great truth that is implied in these verses that is not stated. That truth is that when we treat the poor person who is suffering with the same respect that the rich man gets, then that suffering poor person is encouraged and heartened by the way we treat them. Folks, this is the way every person should be treated when they attend our church. We should treat everyone with respect and love them the way Jesus loves them. Even when they don't dress right, act right, or

even smell right, we are to show them the genuine love of Christ so that they respond positively to the message of Jesus while they are with us. We are not to be judges and decide whom we will accept and those we will reject.

3. Impartial worship humanizes the saint. v. 4

Our tendency as humans is to pick and choose those we will welcome to our worship services and also those we will even invite to our churches. Often times we insist that they be from a certain class of society or even a certain kind or recreation, hobby, interest, etc. For instance, where did we every get the idea that we should have cowboy churches or motorcycle churches and cater to just our kind of people? I can tell you this is foreign to the Book of Acts and it will never have the long-term presence of God upon an attitude of partiality. Some people may make it work for awhile, but sooner or later it will fall on its face. The same is true when we only invite certain classes, particular races, those within our culture we like, and others who might think a lot like we do. This even means that we should not just cater to those of a particular political party in our churches. Nothing should trump our impartiality and compassion for all people. We should treat every person as a human for whom Jesus died, and one that is seriously loved by Christ and us as well. Our intent should be to make every poor person feel like he is extremely loved and important, and we are to help all of the high class people who come to our churches to ultimately be humbled with the love of Jesus Christ. If we are all going to live together in heaven, then we need to live and worship together down here regardless of our class, culture, race, background, etc.

4. Impartial worship highlights the Sovereign. v. 5

Who is really glorified when we show no partiality to certain people that come to our church services? Of course, it is our Sovereign God that gets the glory because

He loves all of us, and according to verse five, God has chosen the poor of this world who are rich in faith to teach all of us what true riches are. It is not the amount of money or the accumulation of stuff that reveals our wealth, but it is the magnitude of our faith. For sure, God relishes the thought of taking those who are rich in faith and genuinely love Him and place them into the Kingdom of God. Then, He will fulfill His promises to every member of His earthly family and these family members will be blessed beyond measure. When He does this, no man can take His glory because He has taken nobodies and made some bodies out of them. May I say that I don't believe we are ever more like Jesus than when we extend our hands from a loving and compassionate heart and reach out to minister to men and women from every tribe, nation, ethnic group, race, clan, and caste, in order to share the love of Jesus. When we do this, God is glorified and mankind is eternally blessed.

Now, can I ask you this question, "Are you reaching out to all of these people and accepting them as God's created children, or do you pick and choose which ones you will love and welcome to your worship services?" I pray that you are sincerely expressing genuine Christianity just like Jesus and James have instructed us!

B. Notice the danger of partial worship. vs. 6-13

Since we have taken a look at the delight and joy of not showing partiality when it comes to welcoming those into our worship services and experiences, it is now time for us to take a look at the dangers involved in committing the sin of showing partiality to those who might come to fellowship and worship with us. We are warned by our Lord through James that showing partiality and preference for others is a bad thing and it always results in some very sad results. Let's take a look at verses 6-13 and heed the warnings so that we don't make the mistake of disobeying God in this matter.

1. Partial worship blasphemes the Savior. vs. 6-7

These two verses are very strong verses. They ask us specifically why we would cater to those rich people who treat us so badly while neglecting the poor people. James tells us that we must be careful or we will find ourselves treating the poor the way we have been treated by the rich. Why would we despise the poor and cater to the rich when the rich through their greed have taken us to court and stolen from us? I believe these verses are telling us that these rich people probably have gotten their wealth illegally and that many people have suffered because of their cruelty. And, it would seem that James knows these rich people who have abused others, and wants the believing Jews to not be further abused by showing preference and partiality to them just because they have money. In fact James tells the believers that to show partiality to the rich is to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ. Why would he say this? I think it is because of the fact that Jesus judges our value systems and wealth by the amount of faith we have, and not the amount of money we have accumulated. So, showing partiality is a serious thing because it blasphemes the name of Christ who loves everyone but looks upon the heart rather than on the things that a person has. Folks, may I ask you this question: “Do you blaspheme the name of Christ with your motive when you give greater attention to the rich than you do to the poor?” Would you try to minister to the homeless man on the street quicker than you would a well-dressed man in the mall? Your answer to this question will reveal the motive of your heart.

2. Partial worship breaks the scripture. vs. 8-11

Dear folks, these next few verses are so very rich. We are told in verse eight that if we follow the royal law of love, “loving our neighbor as ourselves, we will do well.” However, if we fail to love everyone and show partiality to some over others, we are guilty of breaking the law of God. The law

has been given to make us aware of our sin, and so when we commit this sin of respect for some and disrespect for others, we have transgressed the law. Thus, we are surely guilty before God! Therefore, it is very serious when we take the scriptures so lightly and disrespect some while respecting others. This is explained in verse nine very well. However, it is in verse ten where we are warned that if we break the law of God at this one point of showing partiality, we have offended the entire law of God.

Many times in Africa I have illustrated the point of breaking the entire law just because of one sin by taking a chain with me to the prisons and schools where we conduct our services. I always ask the prisoners or students how many links of the chain have to be broken in the chain for the entire chain to be useless. Of course, the response is always just one. So, this truth indicates that we all are sinners before God, and when we transgress the law in any one point, we are considered guilty of sin and then we must repent. Therefore, I believe that in this text James was implying that some of those who showed partiality to the rich were pretending to be saved, when in fact they had never seen themselves as law breakers. Therefore, they did indeed need to repent because they were lost. Folks, I have said this many times through the years of service to Jesus, but I want to say it again. "Our motives for what we do in our Christian service will reveal whether we have genuine Christianity or not". If you are a religious pretender, phony or even hypocrite, you can never go to heaven until you repent and confess that you are a law breaker. Please do this, even this morning, before we enter into our worship service. To break one commandment as described in verse eleven is to break the entire law.

3. Partial worship belittles the scrutiny. VS. 12-13

Verses 12 and 13 really reveal the results of showing partiality and failing to understand that we as believers will be judged for our behavior based upon the way we

treat others. I don't usually give another translation, but I want to give these verses from the Amplified Bible because the verses are really hard to understand. Pay attention to what these verses say and catch the true meaning of the text. "So speak and so act as people should who are to be judged under the law of liberty (the moral instruction given by Christ, especially about love). For to him who has shown no mercy to (others), the judgment will be merciless; but mercy (full of glad confidence) exults victoriously over judgment". In other words, all of us as bonifide believers are going to be judged at the Bema Seat of Christ for the way we have treated other people. If we have shown no mercy to the poor or suffering, we ourselves will be judged in like manner. However, if we have shown mercy to the suffering, then God will extend mercy to us, even if we failed in some ways. So, my dear friends, if we have shown the love of Jesus to all people with a strong effort to minister to the poor by showing grace and mercy, when we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will be shown much mercy in reciprocation for the mercy we have shown. If we show no mercy to the poor here on earth presently, than it is like we are saying, "I don't fear the judgment of God, so I will live as if there is no accountability".

Now, I must tell you again that it is a serious thing to treat people with partiality. We may do this because of race, class, ethnicity, color, culture and other reasons. But if we do this, we must know that we will be held accountable for our behavior. In fact we are belittling and making light of the coming scrutiny of God at the the Judgment Seat!

II. GENUINE CHRISTIANITY IS EXPRESSED WITH IMPLEMENTED WORKS. vs. 14-26

We now come to the last half of this great chapter. It is time for us to understand that in order for us to express genuine Christianity, we must implement great works to let others know that our faith is not just theoretical, but that it is very practical. Many years ago, the

great father of the reformation, Martin Luther, said that he thought the Epistle of James was a “straw epistle” and should not be included in the canon of scripture. His reason for this was that he believed so strongly in salvation by faith alone as recorded in Romans, that he actually thought that James refuted salvation by faith alone and taught that we are saved by our works which indeed would rebut the truth of Romans. But what Luther failed to see was that we are saved by our faith before God, and our testimony is saved by works before men. We shall talk about this in the remainder of this chapter. Please, please don't miss what Jesus is trying to teach us in this text.

A. Notice the profit of these works. vs. 14-16

These three verses are profound. James really brings genuine Christianity into reality in this text. He takes Christianity from the head and heart and puts it into shoe leather and performance. In verse 14, James says, “What profit is it if we say that we have faith, but then have not works or actions to prove it?” Then, he asks the question, “Can faith save him?” This is the troubling phrase for scores of Christians. It has been interpreted by many Christians, including Martin Luther, to imply that faith alone is not enough for salvation. But please remember the title of this lesson. We are talking about “The Expression Of Genuine Christianity”. This means that if we truly do have faith, then we must demonstrate it in and through our practical works. In the next verse, 15, we are told that if our brother or sister has need of clothing or food, then our faith is surely vain unless we meet the need of this brother or sister. Therefore, it is totally wrong to tell someone that you will be praying for their need, and then make no attempt to meet the need. Please remember what I said earlier in this point. We are saved by faith before God, and our testimony is saved before men by our works.

So, James asks the question, “What good is it for us to tell someone that we are concerned about their needs, if we make no attempt to do something about the needs. Let me ask you as a believer, “Are you prone to look at the need of another person like the priest and Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan, and then walk on down the road”? I truly hope this is not you, but I

pray that when God brings you upon a true need that you will not only offer prayer, but that you will be profitable and try to help meet the need of the person or persons as verse 16 tell us.” The question is, “Are you a profitable Christian”?

B. Notice the purpose of these works. vs. 17-20

We now come to four more wonderful verses which give a great affirmation to the truth of our lesson today. Verses 17-20 tell us that if we are going to express genuine Christianity, then we must show our faith in Christ by doing works to demonstrate our faith. In reality, verse 17 tells us that if we don't demonstrate faithful works, then we are saying that we have dead faith, which in reality is not faith at all. Why? Because faith is always active!

In verse 18, we are told to prove that we have faith by carrying out good works. And, if we have no good works, what we are really saying is that we don't have genuine faith. Genuine faith will always prove itself through genuine works. You might say, “well, I have faith but you cannot see it”. James tells us that even the devil can say that because he fears God and trembles in His presence, but the devil is not saved. In other words, if we say that we believe in God (have faith), and show no valid works, than the devil might have one up on us because he fears God and reverences Him sincerely. Therefore, if we are going to say that we have faith, then we must demonstrate that faith through valid works in ministering to others. The purpose of our works is to prove that we have the real goods of a saving faith.

C. Notice the patterns for these works. vs. 21-25

Now if we are going to say that we demonstrate our faith through valid works, what pattern or example do we have to follow to make sure that our works prove that our faith is real. In these verses, we are given the names of two Old Testament characters, Abraham and Rahab, who demonstrated that they had genuine faith through their works. The story about Abraham had to do with his willingness to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice by faith because he believed that God would either provide another

sacrifice, or if God allowed Isaac to actually die that God would then raise him from the day. Abraham had tremendous faith, and what a pattern of faithfulness and works he set for us. And, because of Abraham's faith and works, he was called "The Friend of God" in verse 23. I suppose no greater compliment could ever be paid to a believer than this compliment. I do hope that one day it might be said of me, that I was the friend of God! What a testimony that would be. And then in verse 24, James says that a person is justified before the world by his works. In other words, don't just say that you are a believer, but show me that you have trusted in Christ!

And then in verse 25, we find the pattern of Rahab who was a harlot in Jericho when the Israelites were getting ready to come into Caanan Land. She had heard about the greatness of the God of Israel, and she believe in Him strongly by faith. Therefore, trusting His promises, she hid the spies who came into the city of Jericho to spy out the city before the Israelites took it. Then, because of her faith and works when Israel marched around the city for seven days and blew the trumpets, and the walls came tumbling down, Rahab and her family were saved. She had truly put her faith into works and proved that she had genuine faith. We must follow her example and do the same thing. You can find this story of Rahab in Joshua Chapter 2 in the Old Testament. You need to read this story because it is a marvelous story of how God saved His nation through a harlot. And, if you will study Rahab long enough, you will discover that this saved harlot was in the lineage of our Savior.

D. Notice the power of these works. v. 26

We now come to the end of today's study in Chapter Two of the Book of James. This last verse 26 tells us that faith without works is like a body without the spirit which is dead. If we are going to really express our genuine Christianity, then we must put our faith into action to reveal that we have the life of the resurrected Lord on the inside of us. Beloved, have you really been genuinely saved? If you have and you know it, there should never be an excuse to keep you from going to work for Jesus in

sharing the Gospel and ministering to other people. We have a God-given responsibility to share our faith with others and to demonstrate this faith by helping to meet the need of others. When we do this, then we give testimony to the fact that we have the life of the resurrected Lord living within.

Conclusion

As we come to the end of this lesson, I just want to remind all of us that if we have paid attention to the truth of this lesson, then we should be ready to put into practice the works that demonstrate real faith. My question to you this day is, "Are you working for Jesus?" Are you giving attention to meeting the needs of others who need you? If you are not, it is time for you to get started in showing that your faith is not dead by giving Jesus and others your faithful works. Now, I want to give you a few questions to think about and answer this week as your homework assignment!

1. Do you have genuine salvation, and are you absolutely sure of it?
2. When you come to worship with others, do you show partiality?
3. If you are called upon to minister to the needy, are you selective in whom you will help?
4. Have you ever given way to a rich person and mistreated a poor person? What about the homeless person on the streets?
5. Can you say that you practice the Royal Law of God by loving people from every background, race, ethnic group, and culture?
6. Do you have personal requirements for those you will help?
7. Do you remember a time when you said to a needy person, "I will pray for you, and then walked away without helping them?"
8. Is your faith in God stronger than the devil's?

9. Do you understand the difference between justification by faith and justification by works as described in this study?

10. Who did I tell you that Rahab was in the lineage of?

Lesson 3

“The Exposure Of False Christianity”

Scripture: James 3:1-18

Introduction

Today we are going to move on with our verse by verse study through the Book of James. In our previous lessons we studied in Chapter One how true believers can demonstrate and give valid evidence that they are really genuine Christians. Then in Chapter Two, we studied how we as true Christians should express our genuine Christianity in our daily walk with Christ, and also in in our weekly worship services. Now as we move on into the Third Chapter of James, we are going to get down to the nitty-gritty of how a lot of pretending believers who say that they are saved, in fact demonstrate with their lives that they really are not. I am calling this chapter, “The Exposure Of False Christianity”, because I believe it is time that we “let God be true and every man a liar” when there are so many phony religious pretenders in our churches today. It is truly time for us as church leaders and believers to expose these hypocrites and the damage they cause. During our study of these eighteen verses, we are going to concentrate on the two main areas where phony believers are revealed in our churches today. These two areas are the uncontrolled tongue and an unchristian testimony.

It is obvious to me when I read the Book of James that there were many phony religious pretenders in the early church during the first century. And because of the tremendous persecution that had befallen the church, the true colors of these people were shining through. The reason this was true was because when suffering and trials come our way, then who we are within really comes forth on the outside and shows whose side we are on. As we dig deeply into the next several verses, let me encourage you to ask Jesus over and over to show you personally if there is any religious phoniness in you. If you find some, please deal with it and confess it as sin so that you can be genuine and not expose your hypocrisy to the world. Just remember that all of us will give an account to Jesus in the future for our genuineness and our

authenticity. Let's take a look at ourselves as we go through this chapter and evaluate whether we are sincere, genuine, and credible in our testimony as a professing believer. Please remember that others are watching us!

I. FALSE CHRISTIANITY IS USUALLY EXPOSED FIRST BY THE UNCONTROLLED TONGUE. vs. 1-12

To deal with the subject of tongues that can't be tamed is not a popular subject. In fact, a discussion of how we use our tongues may in fact make a lot of people angry. Why is this? Well, I believe people get angry when we talk about the use of the tongue just simply because they are so guilty. The truth is that whatever is on the inside of us will come out through our mouths when we are faced with some unexpected trial or confrontation. And, if our hearts are not right with God, then all kinds of filth and profanity may exude from our lips. I am sure that all of us have heard politicians say recently that it really doesn't matter how people live in their personal lives as long as they

are good leaders. Well folks, this is truly a lie because our actions always are the results of who we are and what we believe on the inside. It is absolutely impossible for us to separate what we do from who we are and what we believe. Truthfully, there is no such thing as a good leader if he or she is not right on the inside. Their leadership skills are dependent upon their integrity, honesty, truthfulness, and yes, what comes from their tongues when they open their mouths.

Now, let us take a verse by verse explanation of some precious verses in this Third Chapter of James and see what God is trying to show us about the uncontrolled tongue. I do hope that your tongue is under control.

A. An uncontrolled tongue is condemning and presumptuous. v. 1

In this verse James is speaking to some fellow believers who must have a problem controlling their tongues. And, he tells them that to always talk so much and have something to always say about every problem may just be the epitome of arrogance. For he tells them and us that people who are always talking are

always pretending to be “masters” or teachers as this word means, and it implies that they don’t have a teachable spirit and they may just believe that they always have the best and final answer when there is a conversation about anything. And, if a person has this kind of egocentric attitude then this person is exposing himself or herself as condemning others and presumptuous in every situation. This kind of attitude is not of God and will for sure reveal the false Christianity of any person who demonstrates this kind of behavior.

Let me ask you a question, “Do you always believe that you have a better answer than anyone else, and do you always have to have the final say in any conversation”? If these things are true, you will never demonstrate humility and teachableness which are mandatory to manifest genuine Christianity. Throughout the 47 years of my ministry, I have never known one person with this kind of know-it-all attitude that God used in a major way. In fact, what I have noticed is that these people don’t last long in leadership positions and places of teaching others. We should keep the attitude that Paul had near the end of his ministry when he said, **“I have not yet apprehended that for which I have been apprehended of Christ Jesus”**. Phil. 3:12. All of the years of Paul’s ministry, he manifested a spirit of teachableness, and even near the end of his ministry, he realized that he had not yet arrived. Hopefully, we too will demonstrate this attitude if we are genuine believers.

B. An uncontrolled tongue is childish and putrefying. v. 2

Verse two is a great verse. In this verse James tell his readers that there are many ways to offend or hurt others, but there is no greater way to hurt or offend someone than by the use of an uncontrolled tongue. And, he says that if a man can control his tongue, then he demonstrates maturity or perfectness. He also is a man that can control the other desires of the body because the hardest thing to control is the tongue. But, if a person cannot control the tongue then that person is childish and immature and his loose tongue carries with it a contagiousness like a running and putrefying sore. In other words when he speaks with

his tongue out of control and his mind disengaged, he contaminates and offends those around him. And truthfully, more damage is done through an out of control tongue that in any other way.

Now, let me stop here and ask you if you have problems controlling your tongue? Do you speak up when you should shut up? Do you feel that you must always say the last thing in any conversation? If this is your problem, you really need to work on this, and so do I. Folks, the only way to control our tongues is to allow God's Holy Spirit to fill us with His presence and power, and then we can have the power to keep our tongues silent. Many lives have been completely ruined and destroyed by the uncontrolled tongues of sometimes well-meaning people who just can't bridle their tongues. In fact, the greatest hurt that JoAnne and I have ever experienced in our ministry is that which has been caused by the viciousness of uncontrolled tongues. For sure, I want to keep my body under complete control of the Holy Spirit, but I must make sure that my tongue only speaks good things and those things which I must preach from God's Word. And one more thing, if we do damage with our tongues, then we must be quick to apologize and help medicate the hurts we have caused.

C. An uncontrolled tongue is controlling and pseudo. vs. 3-5

In these next three verses, we find what I call some very heavy scripture. The analogies given here about the tongue are related to bits in a horse's mouth, and the helm of a ship in the midst of a storm. Just like the bits in the mouth of a horse that control the direction the horse is to go, the tongue in our mouths will determine the way we go in our lives. If the horse has been trained to respond to bits properly, it only takes a light tug to the right or left to determine which way the horse will go. But, bear in mind that the rider or driver of a horse must also know when to pull, how much tension to use on the bits, and he must be familiar with the attitude of the animal. And so it is with our tongues. We must know how to judge the tension in any conversation and we have to know which direction we should go when we try to guide the discussion. We must know when to speak up,

and when to be still. Like a rider on a horse, we must not jerk the reins and hurt the horse, or we will have catastrophic damage and hurt to those around us. And, in this day of so much concern for animals, we need to know that jerking the reins when we should not will be considered brutality. And, this is true when we use our tongues out of control in a harsh jerking way in any conversation. So, the proper use of our tongues must be under control after we have been trained to use the reins properly. Truthfully folks, just like a small set of bits in the horse's mouth can control a large horse, a tongue in control can guide and direct the lives of scores of people and even our lives as well.

The next thing that is mentioned in these three verses is the small helm that controls a big ship, even in the midst of fierce winds. Think about this just for a moment! A small helm controlling a huge boat in the midst of a troubled sea! Then, think about how many conversations have been used to create huge battles and wars just because the little tongue was not silenced. But also think about how many arguments and fights have been stopped by someone with a mild manner and a peaceful tongue. The decision is ours to make! Will we allow our tongues to do damage when they get out of control, or we keep everything in control by the way we speak, the moment we speak, and the attitude with which we speak.

In verse five we are told that the tongue is a little member and is capable of doing either good things like fire, or if it gets out of control and starts boasting, it reveals that the owner of the tongue is a fake or pseudo and causes great damage. Fire is a wonderful thing to heat our homes, cook our food, heat our steel, and many other great uses. However, if one spark of this fire lands where it should not, it can destroy an entire city like the great Chicago Fire of 1871 which burned for three days and killed hundreds and hundreds of people and destroyed almost the entire city of Chicago.

Let me tell you once again that during our many years in ministry, JoAnne and I have witnessed quite a few situations where some tongues out of control by phony people caused a lot

of hurt and heartaches, people to leave churches, kids of families to leave their homes, and other tragic incidents. All of these things happened because the little tongue uncontrolled was used to inflame small situations which erupted into huge fires. May God help us to get our tongues under control.

D. An uncontrolled tongue is contaminating and passionate. v. 6

As we move on to the next point, let me just mention for more insight that verse six tell us that the tongue has been set on fire by hell and the damage of an out of control tongue is devilish and demonic. We can use our tongues for good and God's glory, or we can use our tongues for evil and Satan's glory. And, as I stated earlier, if we use our tongues in an evil way, it reveals that our entire being and body are evil. In other words, what's inside will come out. If there is anger inside, this anger will come out through our vicious tongues. If there is Godliness inside, then good and righteous words will come out of our mouths. And there is one more thing I want to mention in this verse six. That is that if our tongues which are set on fire of hell are used to spread fire, this fire will destroy the very course of nature, and even the course that God has for us, our families, and even our future. Imagine that! One misuse of the tongue at the wrong time may literally destroy the future of someone or something very good. A good example of this is the story of John Dillinger, one of Chicago's worst mob bosses ever. One Sunday he went to Sunday School as a lad and during this first day in Sunday School, he made some noise and the teacher asked him to leave. It so embarrassed him that on the way out, he vowed to never attend church again. We are not sure if he ever went to church again, but for sure, he never went back to Sunday School. Just think about this! A well meaning teacher used his tongue to scold a disruptive student, and the student leaves to become the one of the worst mobsters in history!

E. An uncontrolled tongue is cantankerous and poisonous. vs. 7-8

Webster's Dictionary defines cantankerous as hard to deal with,

irritating and even agitating. The dictionary listed a mule as an example of something cantankerous. In verses 7-8a, James describes the tongue as like a beast out of control which cannot be tamed. The implication is that no person can tame his tongue with his own effort or power. Just like an animal must be tamed by someone else who has control of the beast, our tongues must be under the control of the Holy Spirit if they are to be tamed. We must not lose hope if we have tongues out of control. The reason is that even if we can't seem to get the victory over our tongues and we are always causing problems or hurting others with our tongues, there is still hope in and through the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, there is absolutely no way to control our tongues without the intervention of the Spirit of God.

The last part of verse 8 tells us that the reason the tongue cannot be tamed by man is that it is evil and full of deadly poison. In fact, the word poison refers to the poison just under the lips like a poisonous snake or serpent. Thus, it is inferred that just like the seriousness of a poisonous snake bite, so is the tongue out of control. It is a serious thing to allow our tongues to be filled with poison and destroy the lives of others. We must allow the Holy Spirit to help us control our tongues because of their deadly potential.

F. An uncontrolled tongue is carnal and pious. vs. 9-12

We now come to four extremely tough verses. In these verses James tells the early Christian church that if their tongues are spueing evil and deadly poison, then they are not really saved. The way James illustrates this is by saying that we can't spout off blessings to God with the same tongue that we curse men who are made in the image of God. James give these Christians a strong warning about being hypocritical by speaking blessings upon God and then speaking curses upon men. As I stated earlier in this lesson, whatever is on the inside of us will come out through our tongues and conversation. James says that this kind of behavior must not be.

Then he tells us that bitter water and sweet water will not come from the same fountain or spring. And, he says that salt water and fresh water cannot come from the same source. And, it is emphatic that fig trees will produce figs and not olive berries. Are we getting the picture? The tongue is a revealer of what is in the heart. And, if our tongues spue out profanity, bitterness, hatred, vileness, etc., then the person guilty of this behavior is not saved. The uncontrolled tongue reveals false Christianity!

II. FALSE CHRISTIANITY IS THEN EXPOSED BY AN UNCHRISTIAN TESTIMONY. vs. 13-18

Much has already been said previously in our study of the Book of James about the importance of having a valid Christian testimony if we are going to convince a lost world that we are genuinely saved. Yet, it would seem in this very wicked day that a lot of professing believers really don't take this matter very seriously. In view of this, I want us to take a close look at verses 13-18 and see what God is trying to say to us about having a genuine testimony as a believer. In these verses James deals very specifically with some things that must not be in our lives if we are going to bear a genuine Christian testimony. Please pay close attention to these verses and measure your present lifestyle to see if there are some negative things in your life that you need to remove, and if there are some positive traits you need to add.

A. This unchristian testimony includes an arrogant satisfaction. v. 13

In verse 13, James asks the question, "Who is a wise man and endowed with with knowledge among you?" Then he goes on to say that it is a person who has a good citizenship or lifestyle showing wisdom with meekness. The word conversation in this verse in our King James Version means citizenship or behavior. If a person claims to be saved and yet does not give a good testimony with meekness, that person is living a lie. This professing believer thinks that he or she has all of the answers and walks around with an arrogant satisfaction about who he or she is, and often bemeans others who try to teach them anything. James also says that a Christian with a genuine testimony will display wisdom in handling the things he or she has to face here

in this world. A non-teachable person will not allow others to provide any wisdom to him or her. And, if this individual has any wisdom at all, it doesn't come from God but from the world and secular man.

B. This unchristian testimony includes an angry strife. v. 14

Now in this verse we really get down to where we live. James tells us in this verse that if there is bitter envying and strife in our hearts, then we are living a lie and really don't know truth. In other words, a bitter and angry man or woman who pretends to be saved, but has not overcome this anger and bitterness, is without a doubt a phony and really doesn't know Christ personally. If a person is genuinely saved, the Holy Spirit will constantly convict this bitter and angry person until he or she deals with this sin and develops a gracious and kind attitude. And, I need to say that a genuine Christian will not always excuse or defend himself or herself by saying that their anger is hereditary or has been just passed down from one generation to the other. There is no valid excuse for remaining bitter and envious when we really come to know Jesus Christ experientially. As James says also in verse 14, there is nothing to be proud of if we are filled with anger, jealousy, strife, and bitterness.

C. This unchristian testimony includes an apparent sensuality. v. 15

In verse 15, we find James referring back to verse 13 where he had mentioned genuine wisdom with meekness or a teachable spirit. He says in this verse 15 that if a person claims to have wisdom and his or her life is filled with sensual and devilish things, the wisdom that he or she has comes from this world and not from God. Now I want to ask a question. Do you live as a genuine believer by and with the wisdom of God? If you do, then you will be more concerned with Godly things than the sensual things of this world. However, if you are one of those people that you only live for this world and its temporary pleasures, then you probably are not even saved. All we have to do is to focus on our daily lifestyles and see if we are living for Jesus or the world! In other words, which gets the most attention and emphasis in your

life, spiritual things and the world to come or this world and those things which will soon be gone? Only you can answer for yourself!

D. This unchristian testimony includes an agitating service. v. 16

Now folks, let's dig just a little deeper into our lives and check out our motives and reactions to other peoples' successes. Are you an envious person, and do you get mad when someone else succeeds? Do you get jealous when you see someone else achieve something? Do you ever resent their success so much that you cause problems, talk about people; maybe even say that those successful people probably were successful because of some unscrupulous practices? And, have you ever resented the success of others so much that you do evil things in revenge and retaliation? If you do, then you are living a lie and are destroying your testimony that you are genuinely saved.

It is obvious to me that James in writing these verses was in fact dealing with some real problems in the early church. Just from reading this text, it seems that someone in the church was walking around in arrogance and self-satisfaction and flaunting how wise they were and probably how much they had done for God. James sends them this letter to deal with these rotten attitudes because they weren't acting like genuine believers. And, because of these bad attitudes, they were serving as agitators in the body of Christ, the church. In these last two verses in this chapter, James proceeds to provide the opposite of these phony hypocrites who had infiltrated the church in the Diaspora. Let's move ahead and consummate this chapter by seeing what the true traits and characteristics of real Christians are.

E. This unchristian testimony includes an absence of spoils. vs. 17-18

Most of you know that the best way to recognize counterfeit money is to know what real money is like. That is the same thing with phony pretenders who claim to be saved, but in fact don't have any fruit to prove it. These last two verses in Chapter Three reveal for us the real fruits of a believer. These fruits

include divine wisdom, purity, peace, gentleness, approachability, mercy, showing no partiality, and showing no hypocrisy. Or, simply, being a real Christian with a real testimony! And finally, James says that if we have real peace with God, we will be at peace with others. Could I ask you two questions today? Do you have these fruits in your life, and are you a peacemaker or a troublemaker? Folks, if we are genuine Christians, we should have the desire to present a testimony that will show these fruits in our lives every day. Now, let me ask you this question, “Has God exposed any false Christianity in your life”? if He has, you need to respond to what He has shown you and ask Jesus to help you become what you should be. And, if you have come to realize that you are not saved, then for God’s sake and yours, please give your heart to Jesus today!

Conclusion

Well, we have now completed another chapter in this wonderful study of the Book of James. Hopefully by now, God has really done a marvelous work in your life and you have gotten rid of any phoniness or pretension that you have found there. In fact, we have studied enough truth in these eighteen verses to expose all of the hypocrisy in our lives and lifestyles. If you have found yourself to be guilty of false Christianity, I plead with you to seek help from me as your pastor, or even someone else in the church who can lead you to Christ if you are not saved. Then, if you are saved and still have some wrong motives and bad character traits, we would like to help you overcome some of these things that are destroying your authentic testimony. Please don’t allow your pride to stand in the way of becoming what Jesus wants you to become.

As we conclude this chapter, I want to excite you about our next lesson on Chapter Four of James. It is a great chapter about how everyone of us needs a personal revival in our hearts and lives. I pray that you will be back in Sunday School for this study.

Your home work assignment is to sit down with this Chapter Three of James and ask Jesus to show you the great fruits of the Christian life that are missing from your life. Even go back to the previous page where I listed the fruits as described in the last few verses. If you don’t have these, why don’t

you spend some time every day asking Jesus to bring these to your life. And no doubt, you will have to get rid of some sin, some addictions, or other things that you are obsessed with in order to become a genuine fruit bearing believer. Have a blessed week in the Lord!

Lesson 4

“The Elimination's Of Genuine Christianity”

Scripture: James 4:1-17

Introduction

Up to this point in our study of the book of James, we have talked about “The Evidence Of Genuine Christianity”, “The Expression Of Genuine Christianity”, and “The Exposure Of False Christianity”. We have done a very serious study of the first three chapters of the book verse by verse. Hopefully, all of us have really reexamined ourselves to see if we really do manifest genuine Christianity in our daily lives. If we have found ourselves to be genuine and not hypocritical, then it is time for us to move on to greater depths and higher heights in getting rid of the flesh and the world in our lives so that we can be completely full of God’s Holy Spirit. If we will move ahead with this process with determined resolution, I believe we will really get rid of the things that are still holding us back and we will experience genuine revival and renovation in our lives. We are either full of sin or we are full of the Holy Spirit based upon our choices and desires. We can be as full of God as we choose to, but this requires that we give special attention to eliminating those things that hold us back and stand in our way of really making progress as genuine Christians. We must be willing and ready to pay the price and even suffer the Godly surgical process that takes the things out of our lives in order to have more of Jesus and demonstrate Him to a lost world. As Paul the Apostle has said in **Ephesians Chapter Four**, **“We are to put off the old man and put on the new man.”** If you were in attendance when I preached on this a few weeks back on Wednesday night, you know that we learned that the old clothes on us are the clothes of a dead man or woman, and they must be gone in order for us to have the new clothes of a resurrected believer. Therefore, we must get rid of these grave clothes and move forward much lighter out from under the weight of our sin, and we must move much fuller with the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot have the power of the resurrected Lord until we eliminate those things from our lives that weight us down and hold us back. Therefore, let’s move forward and clean up our lives and experience His fullness!

I. FIRST, WE MUST ELIMINATE THE UNCONTROLLED PASSIONS IN OUR LIVES. vs. 1-3

Webster's Dictionary defines passion as "an ardent affection" for or to some thing, some activity, or some person. It can also be defined as an enormous devotion to some activity or cause. In the context of these three verses the meaning of passion reveals some desires or passions that truly get out of control and end up with destructive damage. And, if we are going to demonstrate genuine Christianity, we must eliminate these desires or passions from our lives. And I would like to say, that God doesn't take these desires and passions away until we get serious about cleaning up our lives. In other words, He will not do for us what we are commanded to do for ourselves. Let's take a look at these three verses and see the destruction and negative results of uncontrolled passions.

A. These uncontrolled passions cause unbelievable conflicts. v. 1

In this very first verse, James tells the struggling believers who are scattered every where because of persecution that the arguments, fights, and even conflicts among themselves are the direct results of lusts or passions that have gotten out of control. These uncontrolled lusts and passions not only cause a lot conflict and battles between people, but they also negate the testimony of those professing to be saved. In fact, there is probably no greater denial of one's salvation than to have lusts and passions that can never be satisfied. And the sad thing about these passions out of control, is that many times professing believers try to justify them by excusing them as mere desires and valid wants. But, the truth is that when we have passions and desires that can never be satisfied, it means our minds are obsessed with the things we want, and we will do anything we have to in order to get what we lust for regardless of who gets hurt in the process.

B. These uncontrolled passions create unsatisfied cravings. v. 2

Verse Two is a very scary verse. In this verse James tells us that when our lusts and desires are not satisfied legitimately,

then we may resort to unscrupulous practices in order to get what we want. We may steal, we may even kill, and God forbid, we may cause a war among our friends or with our enemies just simply because our lusts and desires are not met.

I want to tell you that I learned much about this when I started my prison ministry working in Florida State Prison back in the 1970's. I remember talking to Ted Bundy about his need for a relationship with the Lord, and he was very bold in telling me that if we had lust, that must be a good thing because God gave it to us, and that to satisfy our lust was perfectly right regardless of how we had to do it. In other words, Ted thought that whatever our desires were, they were valid because God gave them to us and whatever we had to do to satisfy our desires was not sinful. Of course, we all know this is not true because our evil lusts and desires come because of the nature of the old man that dwells within each of us. Ted left out the depravity of man, and so do many others.

Some interpreters question the idea that some of the early Christians were killing others to get what they wanted, but I believe that in the environment in which these people lived as they were scattered and running for their lives, it would have been very easy for someone to justify taking someone's else's life in order to get food or other necessities of life. I have seen this same rotten attitude many times during our years of work in Africa. But, let me add another thought! Even if we don't physically kill someone because of our uncontrolled desires and lusts, then we still may kill someone with our tongues by running someone down, unjustly criticizing a person, or maybe even, lying about someone until the slander is damaging to that person's testimony or fruitfulness as a person.

And believe it or not, in the last phrase of verse two, we are told that if we would simply ask God for the things that we want and desire, if they are according to His will, He would give them to us and we would not have to continue to lust for them and resort to bad and angry behavior to get them from others. Personally, I believe if we don't go to God and ask Him to provide

what we desire, it could simply be because we are ashamed to ask for something that is not in his will to begin with. Ask according to God's will, and He has promised to satisfy our requests and our desires! But just remember, God will not give us what is sinful or that which is not good for us.

C. These uncontrolled passions constitute unanswered communication.
v. 3

Folks, let me ask you today to take a serious look at your prayer life and see if you are getting your prayers answered. If you are praying a lot, but are not seeing your prayers answered, it is time to consider the motives of your prayer life and the kind of requests you are offering before the Lord. James says in this verse three that if our prayers are not answered, it is because our motives for praying are not in order and our desires do not coincide with God's desires for us, and thus, we don't get our prayers answered. Look at the word "amiss" in this verse. The word actually means to pray improperly or to pray with the wrong intention. In other words, when we pray for something with the wrong motives to satisfy our selfish desires, God says that He will not answer our prayers.

Maybe this would be a good time to take a look at the prayers we have been praying and see how many are being answered. If we pray and pray and they never are answered, maybe we are indeed praying with the wrong motives with the wrong desires. Yes, uncontrolled passions produce unanswered prayers.

II. SECONDLY, WE MUST ELIMINATE SOME UNGUARDED PRINCIPLES IN OUR LIVES. vs. 4-5

My dear beloved friends, whose side are you on? Are you living for the world, or are you living for Jesus as you profess? James says in these two verses that we must choose whose side we are on. The reason is that we can't be friends with the world while at the same time trying to be a friend of God. So, whose friend are you? If you have unguarded areas or principles in your life, then you are not God's friend. Let's take a look at these two verses and see what God is saying to us.

A. The first unguarded principle that we must eliminate is friendship with the world. v. 4

You would think that the first thing a believer should know is that if he or she is truly saved, that he or she would separate himself or herself from the world and live what they profess and according to God's will for his or her life. Yet, in this verse four, James accuses the people of committing adultery. Now, I must say that you would think that everyone should know that if you are really saved that you should not commit adultery in any form. Yet, all over the world today, we have people sitting on church pews and chairs claiming to be born again while living in an unholy sexual relationship with someone. Folks, I want to tell you that nowhere in God's Word are two people given the permission to live together in an unmarried relationship. This is serious sin which these two people commit, and in fact, the couple may never get over the effects long after they have been saved, forgiven by God, and have moved on with a proper married relationship. There will be damage in the relationship for years to come, and especially to the children that may have lived in the home.

Friendship with the world is a tragic thing for a professing believer. Truthfully, when this friendship with the world reveals itself in any form of worldly living, our wonderful forgiving God is slapped in the face and we draw a line of enmity between us and our loving Father. The word enmity means hostility, outright opposition, antagonism, and even bitterness. So, we are warned by James that to have friendship in the world is to literally set us in opposition to God our Father. Therefore, in the context of this one verse, it means that we have committed whoredom against our Lord and the fellowship with Him has been damaged. If we are really saved, we will never lose our relationship, but our fellowship is damaged if we have gone whoring after the other gods of the world. Do you think this is serious? I surely do, and I want all of us to understand how tragic it is for professing believers to become an enemy of the one that saved us. Therefore, let us make a renewed vow today to not allow the unguarded principle of separation from the world to hinder our fellowship with Jesus our Lord.

B. The second unguarded principle that we must eliminate is faithlessness in the Spirit's wishes. v. 5

We are told by most Bible scholars that this verse is one of the hardest verses in all of the Bible to translate. I don't agree with their conclusion, but instead I have come to the conclusion that what is being talked about in this verse connects back to what James has been saying earlier in the previous verses in this chapter. In those earlier verses he said that most of the lusts and desires that we have are not of God, but instead are of the world, the flesh and the devil. Therefore, we cannot and we must not give into to these desires. So, in this verse five, I believe what James is saying is that all scripture teaches us that just like we give in to the lusts of the flesh, we must be careful that we don't neglect the desires of the Holy Spirit Who lives within us. This is a contrast between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Holy Spirit.

I believe it is worth mentioning here that in the original Greek language in which the original New Testament was written, there was no capitalization of letters. Thus, we have a small "s" on the word spirit. But, I am totally convinced that this refers to the Holy Spirit because of the contrast that is being made. And the phrase "Do you think the scripture saith in vain" is a statement about the scriptures in general and not a specific passage to which we could refer. Why? Because there is no specific passage that says this!

So, the practical question that I want to ask is, "Are you as a believer living according to the desires of the Holy Spirit within you, or are you living by the desires of the flesh?" If you are not living by the desires of the Holy Spirit, you need to eliminate this neglect from you your life.

III. THIRD, ONE MUST ELIMINATE UNREASONABLE PRIDE. vs. 6-7

Now we know that there is a good kind of pride. We can take pride in work accomplished and achievement if we give God the glory for what has been done. We can also take pride in our children if they excel in

some area of study. We also can take pride in our families, our traditions, and many other things. But yet, there is the destructive pride that takes credit for success and then flaunts that pride into the face of others. In fact, this terrible pride with “i” at the center is all about self. And as we know so vividly by many incidents in the Bible, **“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Proverbs 16:18.** So, we know that pride can be a positive thing or it can be a deadly thing. Therefore, we must make sure that we have the right kind of pride and get rid of the wrong kind of pride. Therefore, let’s look at some verses and see the down side of unreasonable pride.

A. This unreasonable pride rejects the grace of God. v. 6

This is truly one of the great verses of the Bible. James tell us that if we are going to go on being recipients of the grace of God, that we have to resist the tendency to be proud and arrogant, and we must know for sure that whatever we have or have ever accomplished is all because of God’s grace. The very definition of grace which teaches “the unmerited favor of God”, reminds us that grace is a gift which no one deserves, because if we deserved it, it would not be grace at all.

God has truly promised to give us all the grace we need to get through this world and into the world to come. But, if our pride gets in the way and we don’t manifest humility, God will not provide the grace we need in our lives. It is truly a strong statement in this verse when it says that “God resisteth” the proud. This means that God will literally, willfully, and intentionally, say no to providing grace for the arrogant, egocentric, and self-sufficient person. Isn’t it amazing? Grace is the unmerited favor of God, but yet, our attitudes can reject the grace of God and put us into a position to fend for ourselves. Folks, this is a scary thought. May God help us to keep a humble and teachable spirit lest we reject God’s amazing grace which is intended to get us through this life. My friends, “Is your pride showing?”

B. This unreasonable pride rejects the government of God. v. 7a

Let me ask you a question, “Who governs your life?” Is it you or is it God? Be careful when you answer this, because Jesus surely knows who is in control of your life! But, what we must come to understand is that if Jesus paid the price on Calvary and purchased us through His act of redemption, then we are not our own but we belong to Him. Therefore, if we let our pride get in the way, then we are saying no to the government of God. Now, I must admit that it is hard for anyone of us to confess that we are not really smart enough to run our lives, and yet this is truly proven by the huge number of mistakes that we make from day to day. But, if we will humble ourselves and submit to God’s authority, He will govern our lives and provide the grace we need for every day living.

C. This unreasonable pride rejects the gift of God. v. 7b

Another thing that God will do for us if we get our pride out of the way and submit to His authority is to provide the power to reject the attacks of Satan. Wow! Imagine that! We don’t have be victimized by the devil! Why? Because God has promised to give us devil resistance if we humble ourselves and submit to God’s governing power. This devil resistance is truly a gift from God! Now, let’s take an exam. How often does the devil win when he brings temptation your way? Often? Not too often? Rarely? Never? Only you can answer this question correctly for you! If you don’t have devil resistance, then your pride is showing! If you constantly fall victim to Satan’s temptation, then you are rejecting the preserving gift of God’s protective grace and power. And what a thrill to know that if you have God’s devil resistance, then Satan will flee from you and he will not be able to stay around you very long. Isn’t this what we all want? Then, let’s submit to God’s authority and receive the grace of devil resistance. What a joy to live our daily lives without always giving in to the devil. I would remind you that Jesus never saved us to go off and be abused by Satan. His power over Satan is as near as we will allow it to be. Let’s start everyday determined to show the devil the door out of our lives!

IV. FOURTHLY, WE MUST ELIMINATE UNATTENDED PRACTICES. v. 8

Let me start out this point on verse eight by asking you a question. Have you ever been guilty of the sins of omission? I have many times and I am not proud of this. Yet, every believer at some point in his or her life will be guilty of leaving some things out that should have been put in their lives. In this verse, I am going to show you three primary areas where we are committing the sin of omission. Please pay attention and see if you might be guilty or one or more of these three unattended practices. If you are, you must confess these sins of omission and move on with a new life of obedience.

A. First, there is the unattended practice of consecration that must go from our lives. v. 8a

In the first part of this verse James tells the people that they must draw nigh to God, and if they do, God will draw nigh to them. In other words, James is saying that in order to eliminate those things in one's life that prohibit a person from being a genuine Christian, that this person must indeed admit that he is away from God and quickly return to God. Thus, returning to God is admission that one is far from God. This distance from God in the context of this passage indicates that a person has been neglecting close communion with God and sure consecration by God. So, what James is saying is that if we have omitted from our Christian lives the things that will allow God to progressively sanctify us day by day, then this omitted practice is keeping us from being closer to Jesus and more intimate with Him.

The word consecration is a good word, but it is often misunderstood. Why? Because the act of consecration is not something we do for ourselves, but it is something God does for us once we have really surrendered our lives to Him. In other words, we do the submitting and surrendering and he does the sanctifying and consecration.

Now, let me ask you, "Have you made the discovery that you are away from God?" What I mean by this is, do you need to draw up to Jesus and let Him draw nigh to you. If you do, then you need to

take care of this today so that God can continue to consecrate you more and more for Himself.

- B. Secondly, there is the unattended practice of cleansing that must go from our lives. v. 8b

This is a powerful verse! God is simply saying to us through James that if we omit the practice of daily confession and cleansing, we will not be able to draw nigh to God, and He will not be able to do the progressive sanctification and consecration. So, we must give attention to keep ourselves clean before God by the regular confession of our sins. And, the command to cleanse our hands is a demand that we keep our actions clean. Because the hands are the instruments of our actions, then they must be clean in order to draw nigh to God and to be used by Him. So, we need to ask ourselves today, "Are my actions clean today as I seek to draw nigh to God?" If they are not, then we need to repent and walk out of this class clean before God in our actions.

- C. Thirdly, there is the unattended practice of confession that must go from our lives. v. 8c

Now, we will follow up in this last phrase of verse eight what we have just been talking about. If we are living our Christian lives without daily confession of our sins of actions and attitudes, it will be impossible for us to draw nigh to Jesus and experience His drawing nigh to us. We must always remember that sins of action start in our minds, and in our minds we must first commit the sins of wrong attitudes before we commit the sins in our actions. So, if we don't attend to the daily practice of confession, then we will never demonstrate genuine Christianity. Folks, we must vow today to never let one day go by without us evaluating our attitudes and actions in that day, and make sure that we have dealt with the sins of the heart and actions of the flesh before we go to bed for a night's sleep.

Let me repeat what I am saying. Because we sin first in our hearts and minds before we sin with our actions, we must make

sure that our hearts and minds are clean before God if we expect God to draw nigh to us and fellowship with us the way He so desires. And, we must always remember that if we don't keep our hearts and minds pure, then we will be trying to live with a double minded lifestyle. One day we will be trying to live for Jesus and the next day living for self and Satan. And as we have already learned in our study of James, a double minded man or woman is unstable in his or her ways.

**V. FIFTHLY, WE MUST ELIMINATE AN UNBROKEN PERSONALITY.
vs. 9-10**

As we now move on in our study, I need to ask you another question, "Do you have a broken spirit and a contrite heart?" If you do not, then you will never manifest a genuine Christian spirit, especially when it comes to having feeling for others and showing them genuine compassion. In verses 9-10 we are told by James that in order for us to be used by God in this worldly environment in which we live, we must have a humble and broken spirit. Let's take a look at these two verses and see what God is trying to show us about brokenness.

A. Brokenness is a sign of sincere repentance. v. 9

This verse really brings us down to the world of reality as born again believers in this generation of Christians, Why? Because we are being taught today that if we get saved, we will never have problems, never be sick, and will always be prosperous and have anything we have enough faith to claim. But we don't find this doctrine in this verse nine. No, instead, we are told that we should be "afflicted, mourn, and weep". We are also told that our laughter should cease and that our joy should be turned into heaviness. What is James talking about here? He is talking about the results of true repentance which humbles us and brings us to the reality of who we really are before Christ. He is also telling us that if we are going to be used by God in this world, we must then have a compassionate and sensitive feeling for those who are hurting around us. Therefore, we can only have this meek spirit and contrite heart if we have been through much affliction, death, and sorrow. In other words, if we have really

repented of our sins before the Lord and surrendered our lives totally and completely to Him, then we will have to have trials and heartaches to bring us to where we are humble enough for God to use us. In other words, God must brake us before He can use us, even if we have surrendered to Him. The reason is mainly because we can never feel for others until we have gone through trials ourselves. And, don't forget that God is trying to conform us to the image of His dear Son through the sorrows we encounter. And, we will never relate to His suffering on the cross until we die to self and suffer some of the rejection and humiliation that He suffered.

Beloved, have you really repented of your sins and have you reacted to the sorrows and trials the way you should have? I assure you that if we respond the way we should, we still can rejoice and have happiness in spite of what we have faced. God allows all of this to happen in order to give us brokenness.

B. Brokenness is a sign of Sovereign respect. v. 10a

Let me say again that God usually uses trials and suffering to bring brokenness to our lives because we don't surrender our lives to Christ in true humility. Therefore, because we don't voluntarily submit to our lives to Him, He has to bring trials to genuinely brake us. However, this is not His main thought for us. He really would rather that we humble ourselves before Him in total surrender and submission, and then we would have a spirit of brokenness. Yet, because we are so full of pride and our egos don't submit too easily, God may still have to use problems and trials. But, let me appeal to you today to please not continue in your hardness and insensitivity because your hardness and non-feeling attitude may cost you much more than you would like to pay. When we voluntarily submit to the Lordship of Christ the way we should, then we are showing Sovereign respect for God as He rules over His Kingdom and over us as well. An obvious disrespect for God and His servants will always bring trials and disappointments in order for us to be broken. But, if we willingly submit to Him in brokenness through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be broken without so much suffering.

C. Brokenness is a surety of servant revival. v. 10b

In the last part of this verse, we are told that when God brings brokenness to us either through complete surrender or even the trials that He allows to come our way, then when we mourn and weep, He has promised to lift us up. I call this a real revival brought to us by a loving God in the midst of suffering, uncertainty, pain, and calamity. When He ministers to us during these terrible times, then we will learn to minister to others who might go through what we have gone through. So, don't lose heart! If you are going through trials, God will never forget you, and what you learn from the experiences will be priceless. I can tell you this with much confidence because of all that JoAnne and I have been through.

VI. SIXTH, WE MUST ELIMINATE FROM OUR LIVES UNKIND PRONOUNCEMENTS. vs. 11-12

A. Please notice the sinfulness of these pronouncements. v. 11a

In verse eleven of our text it would seem that James changes the subject from humility and personal revival to the seriousness of slander and vicious speech. James tells the early believers that they are not to speak evil of one another. The words "speak evil" here mean to slander someone with a malicious intent. Undoubtedly, James must have known of someone in the church that was doing this very thing. It would be quite unlikely for him to change the subject matter so abruptly and deal with this malicious issue if there was not someone there guilty of what he was talking about. So, James with much strong rebuke tells the church members that true Christians should not slander their brothers and sisters because it was and still is very sinful.

B. Please notice the seriousness of these pronouncements. v. 11b

In the latter part of verse eleven, we learn why slandering someone is so serious. It is serious because it attacks the law and the law giver. The law giver and the law are both perfect and thus qualifying Him and the law to judge others perfectly. But

no human being is smart enough to judge another. In fact, the phrase, “judgeth his brother” literally means to judge with condemnation. It means that a person who slanders a brother or sister viciously has ill intent and desires hurt and destruction of the other person.

It is quite odd that as I sit here today, I am going through an experience where a professing brother has viciously slandered me to government officials and other believers in Africa where I have worked for almost 28 years. This is a man that on the surface has done very little for the Kingdom of God, and yet he has been brutal, told lies, and viciously slandered me to the good people I have given my life to. And, because he has attacked me, he has also attacked my dear wife because she is my help mate, my best friend, and the greatest support that a preacher could ever have. I must confess to you that it has really been hard for me to bear this terrible attack without fighting back. And yet, I know that according to the scriptures I can't fight back. However, my fear is that if we don't start holding these people accountable for this type of behavior, they will just go on and on hurting scores of others for years to come. I suppose that we have to find the balance between holding them accountable and judging them. Yet, I do hope that all of us can learn from these bad examples and do everything we can in and through the power of the Holy Spirit to not be guilty of the same behavior.

C. Please notice the supposition of these pronouncements. v. 12

I would like to paraphrase this verse if you will allow me to do so. James says literally, “Who do you think you are to set yourself up as a judge over another?” “It is only God that has the authority to render final judgment for our behavior.” It is truly the epitome of arrogance and ego for a person to suppose that he or she is wise enough and has enough authority to slander another believer. Folks, slander is one of the most serious sins that any person could ever commit. It is amazing the tragic results of slander in the world we live in today. Are you a slanderer? Have you destroyed or killed someone else's life or testimony by your gossip and slander? I surely hope not!

Before I move on to the last verses of this chapter, I want to tell you a true story that happened many years ago that illustrates the tragic results of slander and gossip. I read this in Dr. John MacArthur's Bible commentary on the Book Of James. You can read the story also on pages 226-227. Let me share this story with you.

Many years ago up in the state of North Dakota, there was a young family. The family lived in a small house with a picket style fence around it. The young wife had delivered two children and after she birthed the last child, she was quite sickly most of the time. The kids grew up and were able to walk and run quite well. Her husband would go off to work each day, and when the he came in from work every afternoon, then the wife and children would walk out to the gate of the fence and happily meet the father. Then they would walk to the house laughing and joking, always having a good time.

One day a nosey neighbor started a story of gossip slandering the husband to many of their neighbors. This long tongue woman told that this young father had been caught with another woman, but this was totally false. A short time went by and one afternoon the father arrived home from work only to find no wife and children at the front gate rejoicing that he had come home. He walked on into to a quiet home to find no one there, until he went down into the basement to look for his family. There in the basement hanging on ropes from a beam hung his wife and the two children; all of them dead. The young wife had heard about the story of the gossiping neighbor and she couldn't get over the embarrassment. So, she hanged the kids and herself rather than face more questions. All of this happened because of lying slander. Was this tragic? You bet it was, and all because of the sin of slander!

VII. SEVEN, WE MUST ELIMINATE UNSOUND PRESUMPTIONS. v. 13

What are these presumptions that we must must eliminate if we are going to demonstrate a life of genuine Christianity? Well, there are three things in this one verse that we must see if we are going to be

to show that our Christianity is genuine. Let's take a look at them and see if we might be guilty of any of these.

A. The first unsound presumption includes our unchangeable plans.
v. 13a

In this verse James tells the early Christians that they must not presume to live as if they will never die or that their plans will be changed. Instead, they need to live every day knowing that life is short and that although we plan our lives, we had best plan according to God's plans for us because we never know when He will call us home. It is tragically wrong to plan our lives as if we will be here forever when we know fully well that none of us will. We must live every day in God's will with Jesus and His Kingdom as our priority.

B. The second unsound presumption includes an uninterrupted period.
v. 13b

I have already mentioned this, but it just simply says that we must be careful when we make our plans as if we will be here forever. Why? Because life is always changing and we are not guaranteed one more day. This is all in the hands of Jesus, and this is the way we should live. We must not live with the false assumption that we have all the time in the world when we know fully well that no one is certain of tomorrow.

C. The third unsound presumption includes an unrewarding productivity.
v. 13c

What do I mean by this unrewarding productivity? Well, I mean that James cautions us against living our lives like we will be here forever while we give our attention to only those things that are temporal. No one should have his or her priorities wrong and only give attention to those things that will not bear any eternal fruit. Instead, we should evaluate our lives and concerns with an eternal prospective to make sure when this life is over that we will have fruit that lasts forever. Of course, the only way

we can have eternal fruit is to invest our lives in the souls of men. The reason this is true is because only saved souls go to heaven. Investment in anything else bears no eternal fruit. My friends, I beg you to not go to heaven empty handed!

VIII. EIGHT, WE MUST ELIMINATE UNREALISTIC PLANS. vs. 14-15

Now let me add some more to what I have been talking about from verse 13. James goes on to share with the early scattered church that they should not plan their lives to exclude the possibility of death. We don't like to think about this, but when we are living in God's world, with God's plan, breathing God's air, eating God's food, and drinking God's water, we can't exclude Him from the equation for our plans and lives. Let's take a look at these two verses to learn some eternal truth.

A. The unrealistic plans include living as if we are aware of our own destiny. v. 14a

What I means by this statement is that we must not live as if we know how long we will live and when we are going to die. Instead, we are to live by faith knowing that our plans can suddenly be changed by God's plan for us, and there is nothing we can do about it. In fact, James says that our life is like a vapor that is here today and suddenly gone tomorrow as if it has been blown away by the wind. We must not make unrealistic plans when we don't even know what tomorrow will bring. But, we are to plan our lives according to God's will for our lives believing that we have many years to live, but yet living every day as if it is our last one.

B. The unrealistic plans include living as if we can avoid our own death. vs. 14b-15

There are some people in the world that live every day as if they will be the exception to death. There have always been people like this, and there always will be. These people feel that they are invincible and they will be the exception and bypass death. Yet, we know this is not true and it won't happen. So, if we live

our lives like we will be here forever, then we are being very foolish. What we should do is to live as I mentioned before. We should plan our lives according to God's will and we should face everyday as if it is our last one, and we should live our lives with an eternal prospective knowing fully well that whatever God wants and wills is what will happen. We should not be so vain as to flaunt our invincibility and believe that we are here forever doing whatever we want and decide to do. Instead, we should live our lives saying, "If it is the Lord's will, I will do this or that".

Now beloved brother or sister! How do you live your life? Do you run rambunctiously through life believing that you are the master of your fate and that you will live forever? If this is you, you better change the way you live and do so right away. Why? Because you don't know what tomorrow may bring and neither do I.

**IX. NINE, WE MUST ELIMINATE UNCHRISTIAN PLEASURE. vs. 16-17
vs. 16-17**

My friend, what do you boast in? What really makes you happy and turns you on? Where do you get your pleasure? In these two last verses of chapter four, James seems to be saying that if we are so egotistical and arrogant to believe that we indeed can be the masters of our fate and lords of our lives, we better be very careful. The reason is that not only do we not know when God will call us home in death, but if we blatantly brag about who we are and what we are going to do, then whatever rejoicing we can do is only going to be short-lived because we all will give an account to God for our conduct. Then, James tells the early church believers if they know to do good, and of course they do after James' letter, and they don't do good, it is going to be willful sin. And, I would remind all of you that in the Old Testament, there was not sacrifice for willful sin. In other words, this is serious business. Therefore, let us be careful that we don't take pleasure in our sin because this sin will ultimately be judged.

A. This temporary pleasure is selfish. v. 16

B. This temporary pleasure is sinful. v. 17

May we pay attention and not be guilty of this willful sin!

Conclusion

Well, believe it or not, we have finally come to the end of Chapter Four. This has been a marvelous chapter and if we have really paid attention to what we have learned, then we should right now be working on our spiritual lives by eliminating the things that will keep us from demonstrating genuine Christianity. I do pray that you have really paid much attention to the numbers of great truths that God has tried to reveal to us through James, the half-brother of our Lord. This chapter has required a lot of study time and in some cases, some intense scrutiny of our lives. I sincerely pray that God has used this chapter of study to get you and your family living by an eternal prospective and living every day in view of the day of accounting before Jesus. I want to leave you with some questions once again so that you can really evaluate your Christian life and see if you are truly a genuine Christian.

1. Do you have some uncontrolled passions in your life that are causing problems for you with others? Yes_____No_____ If your answer is yes, what are these problems?
2. At this time in your life on a scale of 0 -10, where would you rate your spiritual life in relationship to living close to the world? _____
10 means you are not living close to the world and 0 means you are living right in the middle of the world's system.
3. How would you evaluate yourself on conquering bad pride in your life?
Successful_____Not successful_____
4. Do you feel that right now you are living a consecrated life and fully devoted to Jesus? Yes_____No_____.
5. Would you say that you are living with a broken spirit and a contrite heart? Yes_____NO_____
6. Being honest before God, have you slandered someone recently? Yes_____ No_____. Have you reconciled with them if yes? _____

Lesson 5

“The Endurance Of Genuine Christianity”

Scripture: James 5:1-20

Introduction

Today we come to the last chapter of our study in the Book Of James. This has been a wonderful study in God’s Word, and I pray that God has really used this great study to not only bless you, but hopefully change your life as well. During this study we have uncovered a tremendous amount of practical truth that surely God has used to challenge us, but also to change us as we apply this truth to our lives. The central theme of this entire study has been “Manifesting Genuine Christianity”. It is my personal prayer that since we have spent so many weeks in this study that now we all have critiqued our own lives and changed whatever we needed to in order to really live lives of genuine Christianity. It is my desire that every taint of hypocrisy has been removed from our lives and that when people look at us, they will see real believers with lives that magnify and glorify only our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we come to this last chapter in this book, we need to give much attention to the content of every verse because in this fifth chapter we can learn how to really endure as transparent believers during times of difficulty. This is very relevant to us in these days in which we are living, but it was assuredly relevant during the days when James wrote this book because the early dispersed Christians were suffering tremendously as we talked about in the early part of these lessons. I do hope you will join me in making a devoted commitment to faithfully endure through times of storms, unexpected tragedies, and even in times when we are so misunderstood by some of our friends who profess to be saved and part of the body of Christ, but yet show so little genuine evidence of really being saved. I suppose that the reason I am writing about this right now is because JoAnne and I are going through a difficult time when people we love and have tried to minister to in so many ways, have hurt us beyond description. So, it is time for us to endure in spite of the accusations, harsh criticisms, and even revengeful acts of others. May God give us strength to endure like the early church did!

I. GENUINE CHRISTIANITY WILL ENDURE UNTIL CHRIST REPAYS THE OPPRESSOR. vs. 1-6

When we as believers are going through one trial after another one, it always seems that we will never get out of this terrible valley of despair, and it looks to us like those who hurt us will never receive God's punishment for what they have done to us. Of course, it is during these times that we want to take the place of God and take His revenge into our own hands and measure out harsh punishment for those who have made us to suffer. The hardest thing for us to do is to wait upon the judgment of God upon the oppressors, and let God handle this in His own time. It is surely hard to keep going when we have been abused, used, accused, or treated unjustly. But, we can indeed endure whatever we have to face when we constantly dwell on the promises of God and never doubt that He is a just God and He never forgets or loses the records of what we have had to endure. This is why His judgment is always just and appropriate. Now, let's take a look at chapter five verse by verse and see how Jesus handles those who have hurt and abused others.

A. Notice the content of this repayment. vs. 1-3

1. There is the loss of peace. v. 1

The phrase "Go to now" in verse one actually can be read, **"Come now", ...ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.**" James is telling those rich men who had oppressed and abused the early believers to be ready to receive the judgment of God. He tells these crooks that tremendous misery is coming which will cause these arrogant abusers to weep and howl out loud for the judgment they will experience. And, the truth that James sets forth here is that the judgment and punishment of God is on the way and there is no way to stop it. It is surely going to be a serious judgment because God always keeps the records and nothing is ever forgotten unless the sin is confessed and under the blood of Jesus. Folks, don't ever believe that you will be the exception and escape God's promised chastisement.

All of the abusive and harsh rich men who have taken advantage of others will be repaid severely by God Who never breaks a promise, good or bad! In other words, the calm sophisticated man who thinks that he can steal from others and get by with it, shall surely find out that the peace he had is merely temporary and he will face the judgment of God where there will be no peace.

2. There is the loss of prosperity. v. 2

Those who have gotten their riches by treating others unfairly and unjustly through corruption and deception are going to suffer unbelievably. In fact, they will lose everything they have because of their sin. At one time they justified their actions by believing it was all right to abuse and steal from others to get what they wanted. But, they will soon find out that God will take away all that they have acquired in a moment of time, and they will lose all of their wealth because of their sin. No wonder that Jesus said in **Mark 8: 36**, **“What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and yet lose his soul.”**

My dear friends, I think I need to stop here and warn you about only living for this world and neglecting eternity. It doesn't matter how much we make, it will never be enough if we don't live for eternity rather than for right now. So, beloved brothers and sisters, what has priority in your lives, living for now or living for eternity? I pray that it is the latter!

3. There is the loss of position. v. 3a

Verse three is a very serious verse. In this verse, James tells the rich people who have abused and hurt those who have so little that the day will come when all of their gold and silver will be coated with rust to the point that you will not be able to read the images on these precious metals, and you will not be able to see the amounts if they are made into coins. The rust will make the gold and silver

worthless because of the sins of the rich men who have gotten the gold and silver in corrupt ways. Isn't it amazing that these metals that don't ordinarily ever rust will be turned to rust by our Sovereign God. This reveals the way God really feels about the sins of these rich people.

The verse also teaches us that the rust on these precious metals will be a witness against these deceptive and evil rich men. It is obvious to me that these rich men who had deceived and stolen riches from hurting and suffering people were hoarding these riches and using them as an indication of arrogant pride to show others just how rich they were. Let me refer back to verse two where we are told that their riches were corrupted and their garments moth eaten. I am convinced that this had happened because these rich men were hoarding these metals and fashionable garments while other people went hungry, naked, and without funds. And, because of their arrogance and self-sufficiency, God promised to destroy everything that they valued so highly.

In the middle of verse three, James tells his readers that the rust on the silver and gold which the rich men will one day receive, will ultimately eat their flesh like a fire. I sincerely believe that what James is talking about here is the eternal hell fire that is coming for these selfish rich men who will one day be judged for their hypocrisy by being cast into the lake of fire. Please remember that the theme of James is manifesting genuine Christianity. Therefore, the ungodly behavior of these deceptive rich people who I believe were in the early church will one day in the future be revealed to have been phonies.

4. There is the loss of protection. v. 3b

In the last part of verse three, we are told that the rich men who have hoarded their riches so that they can use their riches for protection and a good living when they are old, are going to lose all of these riches. In other words, all

of the riches in the entire world will be worthless to protect these liars and deceivers from the impending judgment of God which is coming.

My dear friends, I want to warn each of you who are reading this lesson that if you are depending upon your bank account and riches to take you to heaven, just remember that wealth is worthless when it comes to going to heaven. So, if you are presently a hypocrite and living a lie, let me encourage you to repent and become a genuine born-again child of God before it is too late. It will be extremely tragic to live here affluently on stolen riches and then die and go to hell as a spiritual pauper. It is not God's will that you do this, and I pray that you don't.

B. Notice the cause of this repayment. vs. 4-6

These next three verses are some of the scariest verses in the entire Bible. In these verses James tells the corrupt rich people that their sin of deception and hoarding their riches was bad enough, but this was not the main problem. The main problem was how these rich deceivers had mistreated their workers in the process of collecting evil money. In other words, they as employers had treated their employees terribly. Let's take a look at each one of these verses and see what God is showing us.

1. This repayment will be caused by an occupation in dishonesty.
v. 4

Verse four tell us that these rich people had defrauded their workers who were reaping and harvesting the crops by not paying the workers what was coming to them. In actuality, they were treating the people like slaves. The workers spent many hours in the fields doing the work expecting to get paid what they had been promised, and then when the crops were in from the fields, then they were under paid or not paid at all. And because of this unjust treatment, the employees had cried out to the ears of the employers to please give them what they had

promised, but they would not listen. Thus, James tells them to not worry because if the rich employers did not hear their cry, the Lord of host had heard them and would respond in answer to their cries. And, the employers could be sure that God would judge these unjust thieves.

2. This repayment will be caused by an obsession with debauchery. v. 5

The word debauchery in Webster's Dictionary is defined as "extreme indulgence in sensuality". Verse five tell us that these rich employers mistreated their field workers and then decided to use the funds that should have been given to the servants for working in the fields in a wicked and immoral way. All these rich thieves desired was to party away their lives in sensuality while those in extreme need barely got by with the basic necessities. And, while all of this was happening, these rich people were pretending to be believers. What hypocrisy!

I want to speak to this verse in a very serious and practical way. I have been a pastor for a long time. I have known a large number of church members who profess to be saved and really know Jesus, but yet they always store up their wealth while never giving to the poor, the sick, prisoners, widows, and never to missions. They hoard their money while the hurting continue to suffer and the lost continue on their way to hell. I must tell you that I don't believe these people are saved one iota. They are merely lost wicked men whom God has blessed, and they are living a lie of deception and never ministering to anyone. For sure, their treasures will be destroyed with them when they die and face the judgment of God.

3. This repayment will be caused by an occupation in death. v. 6

Verse six lays the charges very simple and plain to those religious pretenders who had stolen, deceived, and abused

the suffering people in the early church. They were guilty of condemning and even killing some of the people that they had abused. Abuse was not enough, so they proceeded to castigate the people running them down, looking at them with a condescending attitude, and even possibly causing some of the people to die from starvation, neglect, or willful abuse. If the people were not literally killed, then their lives and self-esteem was destroyed by these vicious people. And, isn't it amazing that these people were in the church pretending to be spiritual? I want to cry out, "where were the church leaders who should have been defending and protecting them?" May God help all of us as leaders of our churches to never allow this to happen in any of our churches today ever again!

II. GENUINE CHRISTIANITY WILL ENDURE UNTIL CHRIST RETURNS FOR THE OPPRESSED. vs. 7-8

This entire chapter is a discussion of how genuine believers stand firm in the midst of tremendous suffering and abuse. James tells the early dispersed believers that in spite of how they were being abused by other wealthy professing Christians that they must stay faithful to the very end when Jesus comes again. And, I can imagine that James' words were of great consolation to these hurting believers because as our Lord's half brother, he for sure knew that Jesus would return to the earth again. Just try to imagine how much these first century Christians believed in the second coming of Christ. Then, let's check out our expectation for His return. He did indeed come the first time, and we know that He will come again. But how do we endure until He gets here? Let's take a look at the next verses and learn how.

A. We must endure with patience until Jesus returns. v. 7a

The word patience in verse seven has the meaning of being longsuffering and bearing up under the load until some good news comes. After addressing the rich men that were hurting the people in the early church, he now turns to trying to encourage those who were suffering so much. He reminds them

that hope is on the way because Jesus is coming again. Of course, if James would have known that there was still at least two thousand years before Christ's second coming, he may not have been so hopeful. But yet, here we are today over 2,000 years later still waiting for Jesus to return, so we should be even more encouraged to be patient and look for His return.

James tells the early church that they should be patient, long-suffering, and hopeful as they anticipate the day when Jesus will come again. All of their suffering will be rewarded when Jesus does return, and they will be set free from all persecution, trials, and the storms of life. We too must learn a lesson from what James is saying. Regardless of what we have to face, there is a genuine hope based upon the promises of God that Jesus will return and get us out of this suffering. Therefore, we must not and we cannot quit. Too much is at stake.

B. We must endure with perception until Jesus returns. v. 7b

If we didn't know that God never breaks a promise, it would be very difficult for us to wait patiently for the return of Christ. Yet we do know, and according to the last part of verse seven, we are told that just like the farmer waits for the latter rain on his crops, we must wait patiently for the latter rain for God's harvest of souls which will be culminated when Jesus arrives. In order for the farmer to have a good harvest, there must be the early rain just after planting and the latter rain a little while before harvest in order for the harvest to be complete. So, as we wait for Jesus to come again, let us sincerely believe that Jesus wants to bring us the latter rain of revival and make His bride complete. And while we wait, we must be actively engaged in taking the Gospel to a lost world.

So, if we are genuine believers, we should be longing for Christ to return, but like the farmer we must be working and doing our part to bring in the harvest. Why? Because very soon Jesus will be here and the harvest will be complete. I must tell you that this really gets me excited about the coming of the Lord. May He even come today is my prayer!

C. We must endure with persistence until Jesus returns. v. 8a

In the first part of verse eight we are told to be patient and have established hearts. To have a stable heart is to be firm in our commitment and stand, and not to be shaken as we await the coming of Jesus. This means that we will demonstrate true persistence in our faith and behavior as we wait on Jesus to come again. In other words, we will not lose hope and give up in despair because we believe His promise to come. Our persistence should be so obvious that we will provide a great testimony for others to view and follow.

D. We must endure with positiveness until Jesus returns. v. 8b

Imagine yourselves being in a difficult situation with persecution and suffering abounding because you faithfully serve Jesus. Think what it must have been like for the early church to be going through so much hardship and difficulty. Yet, James tells them that they must believe that Jesus is indeed coming again. With their belief in this promise, they could be positive about their future. And so can we! Regardless of what we have to face in life, we can still be positive because we know that as children of God that we are on the winning side. Therefore, may we rejoice because we are sure that Jesus breaks no promises and He will soon be here again. This would be a good place to shout hallelujah!

III. GENUINE CHRISTIANITY WILL ENDURE UNTIL CHRIST RELIEVES THE OPPRESSION. vs. 9-20

We have now established the fact that Jesus is indeed coming again. James tell us to not worry, but patiently trust the words of Jesus that He for sure will come again. Now in these last verses in the Book of James we are told by James what we as believers should be doing until Jesus gets here. We are told that Christ is coming to take us out of the oppression and suffering. Therefore, let us be faithfully living and working the way we should until He arrives. So now, let's see what James tells us that we should be doing until Jesus comes again. If we follow the instructions of James about our behavior and conduct until Jesus arrives, we will not be embarrassed or ashamed when He comes!

A. He relieves the oppression by fellowship with present brethren. v. 9

Folks, we know that when Jesus comes again that we are going to be delivered from all of the oppression that we have received here. But, what should we do until He comes? We should live in peace and harmony with our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. In verse nine we are told to not be jealous or grudging of one another, but instead we are to live in peace as much as we can. And, this verse reminds us that when we judge others, we are forgetting that Jesus will be our ultimate judge. Therefore, any judgment we render toward others now will be insignificant in view of this coming judgment. So, don't be condemning or judgmental, but instead be reminded that Jesus will handle this judging when He comes again. In **John 5:22**, we are told that all judgment has been given to Jesus by God the Father! I don't know about you, but this is surely a solemn reminder of who is in control. We cannot be at peace with our brothers and sisters if we constantly are jealous of them, or render judgment of their behavior or character.

B. He relieves the oppression by the faithfulness of past brethren.
vs. 10-11

In these two verses James does what many of our biblical writers have done in an attempt to encourage believers in all ages. James uses great saints from the past to illustrate how we are to handle our difficulties. First, he uses the example of the prophets of old and how they handled their suffering and affliction. He tells us that they were patient and so should we be. And, in verse eleven, we are told that we know that these Old Testament prophets even rejoiced in their times of suffering, and because of how they handled their pain and agony, so should we rejoice today when we have to go through affliction.

Then, in verse eleven, James uses the illustration of Job who withstood so much suffering because he kept trusting God right in the midst of his affliction and loss. Ultimately, Job received the mercy and pity from God and was brought through his pain by a tender and consoling God.

Let me make a practical application here. If you are going through trials because you are a believer, can I admonish you to go back and remember some other Christian who withstood suffering and came out with a stronger faith. Then, when you think of that individual, then do your best to face what your are facing the way that believer in the past faced his. In other words, we must learn from the examples of those who were faithful to the end, even when their trials were so severe.

C. He relieves the oppression by the fruitfulness of pure brethren.
v. 12

Integrity, what is integrity? This is a good question for this generation of lay people and pastors who claim to be servants of God. Never in my entire life have I seen such a lack of integrity, honesty, or purity as I am witnessing almost every week of my life in this generation. It would seem that a lot of people have not learned the importance of speaking and living with truthfulness. I see people who call themselves Christians just simply lie to others with no conscience or shame whatsoever. Yet, they believe they are good saints and even honest pastors. But in fact, they are religious pretenders who think nothing of telling a lie, exaggerating the truth, or deceiving people with whom they have to work or deal with. James tell us in this verse 12, that our words should be truthful and completely honest, and whatever we say should reveal the truth or integrity of our hearts. Never should we promise to do something and then not fulfill what we have promised! As James states in this verse, “let our yea be yea, and our nay be nay”. As some have stated before, let our words be our bond, because our words reveal what is in our hearts. What is in our hearts will be demonstrated in the way we live.

Could I ask you a question? Do you have a pure heart? And, do you fulfill your promises that you make? When people see you, do they see a person of integrity or do they know you as a phony who says one thing and does another? I pray that you live a pure and honest life, and I pray also that you hang out with pure and truthful people. If you want to get through the suffering and

and affliction of this life until Jesus comes again, you must hang out with the right kind of people. Peer pressure is a bad thing, unless your peers are genuine believers with good testimonies of integrity and faithfulness to God. Just remember that it only takes one rotten apple to turn the entire bushel of apples rotten. Who you spend your time with is so vitally important. If you don't believe this, just think about the thousands of people who are in jail and prison today because they started running with the wrong crowd.

D. He relieves the oppression by the faith of praying brethren.
vs. 13-18

As we move into these verses, let me ask you if you are an intercessor? Do you daily intercede on behalf of other brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you spend a lot of time praying for others who are suffering and going through agony? Just think about these questions for a few moments, and then think about those who have prayed for you nonstop through the years. I think you will agree with me that we could never get through this life were it not for the prayers of others. We must have people praying for us, and we must be praying for others as well.

In verse 13-18, James tells the early believers that if they are going to get through times of physical suffering and endure the hardships as believers, they must have others praying for them. Folks, I know from experience that my wife and I could not have done all that we have done down through the years for Jesus, were it not for the prayers of God's people. Even right now as I write these notes on James, I am suffering with this terrible incurable disease. Truthfully, this morning when I started writing, I was so nauseated that I didn't think I would be able to continue. Yet, I know that there are people praying for me and it is only through their prayers that I am able to continue on. And one last note before moving on. JoAnne and I are getting ready to make a long trip to Texas by vehicle. The trip will be almost 3,000 miles by the time we return home. There is no way that I would want to make this trip if God's people were not praying for us.

So, let's pray for one another and let's ask others to really pray for us as we wait for Jesus to come again.

1. The prayers of these praying brethren are personal prayers.
v. 13

Verse 13 starts out this section about prayer by encouraging those who are sick or afflicted to pray on their own behalf. And, I believe there is an implication in this verse which implies that the prayers will be answered, and then the sick will be happy and need to sing psalms of praise.

I also believe that in this verse there is the implication that when we pray for ourselves and God answers the prayers, then others should join in our time of rejoicing in order to give praise. Just bear in mind that the early church that James was writing was suffering tremendously, so everyone should be thrilled when one of the brothers or sisters was healed or made well. It should still be this way today!

2. The prayers of these praying brethren are pastoral prayers.
v. 14

We now move from praying for ourselves, to calling the church elders or leaders to come pray for us or someone in our home that is sick. Folks, this is one of the most abused verses in all of the Bible. It is truly a good verse, but it has been pulled out context and twisted to align with much false theology today. Therefore, let me be very candid in trying to interpret this wonderful verse.

Get the picture! James tells the early church that if there is someone so sick that he or she cannot come to the collective fellowship of believers, that they are to call for the elders of the church and allow them to come and anoint the sick person with oil and then pray a prayer of faith over this sick person and God will heal the sick. Now, let's really scrutinize this verse to see what God is saying to us. Please pay attention so that you are not deceived!

Notice if you would that the sick person was too sick to attend the assembly of the saints. Therefore, the elders were called to the house. Therefore, there is no valid evidence that anointing the sick in a collective worship service was ever done in the early church. To do so would make a show out of a private miracle that God wanted to perform for His own glory; not the glory of a preacher or other person. Secondly, notice that there were elders plural and not a single elder. The purpose of this was so that when they prayed over the sick, no one would know whose prayer of faith had been answered. Therefore, once again, no one could receive the glory but Jesus.

There are two things I want to say about the anointing with oil. First, I do believe that the anointing with oil is probably a picture of the Holy Spirit Who in truth would have to do the healing. With this thought in mind, it means that God did the healing through His Holy Spirit, and the oil was a symbol or picture of the Holy Spirit's power.

However, there is something else here that needs to be mentioned. During the days of the early church, there was a tremendous shortage of doctors and medicine. Therefore, anointing oil was used to rub on the wounds of people who had been injured in some way. Thus, this oil may have been used to actually rub on a physical wound, but because we don't know for sure, I am inclined to believe that it refers to the anointing of the Holy Spirit because there were many anointings with oil in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. So, probably the anointing with the oil refers to the necessity of the Holy Spirit actually doing the healing.

Also, I want to mention that I have found nowhere in the Bible where there were anointing services in a joint worship service. Thus, I believe the anointing should be done by more than one church elder and it should be done behind closed doors. But, I am not a legalist with this interpretation if people want to do it in the church assembly!

3. The prayers of these praying brethren are productive prayers.
v. 15

It is wonderful to know that if we pray with believing faith that God will answer on our behalf. However, He doesn't always answer the way we think He should. Sometimes He says yes, sometimes no, and sometimes, you must wait a while. I know this doesn't align with some modern charismatic theology which believes that God has to heal everyone, but it is a fact. Sometimes the greatest healing is when God takes a suffering brother or sister on to heaven to be completely out of pain and suffering.

Yet, here in verse 15, James does tell the early suffering believers that if they pray a prayer of strong faith, that God will deliver the sick and the Lord shall raise him up. And, if the sickness has been caused by sin, then the sick person is promised forgiveness if he or she will repent of the sin that made them sick to begin with.

There are probably some of you that don't think that sickness is the result of sin, but all you have to do is trace the earthly ministry of Jesus to see that many of the people He healed were forgiven of their sins in the same healing episode just simply because their sin had made them sick. And, I would like to say as a long time pastor, that I have visited a huge amount of people during my ministry whose sin caused their sicknesses. In other words, their sicknesses were self-inflicted. I hope you are not living with a self-inflicted sickness because of your sin. If you are, God will for sure forgive your sin, and He may just completely heal you. I will pray to this end!

4. The prayers of these praying brethren are penitent prayers.
v. 16a

In verse 16, I believe we have come to a very revealing verse. The first part of this verse seems to change the subject from the previous verse talking about the prayer

of faith healing a sick person. Yet, in this verse it seems that the sicknesses that James was addressing in the early church were not only physical, but maybe even emotional, relational, and most of all, spiritual. I say spiritual because James tells them to confess their sins one to another. So, it is obvious to me that there was some sin between these believers, and this sin needed to be confessed in order for them to have a genuine testimony that they were really saved. Thus, James just comes right out and tells them to get right with God and with each other. This penitential prayer that James tells the people to pray is a prayer of confession, and its purpose is to bring healing to their relationships. I would to God that we had some leaders name James in this day and age to tell church members to get right with one another so that there could be healing in our churches.

5. The prayers of these praying brethren are passionate prayers. v. 16b

In the second part of verse 16, we find a scripture phrase that has probably been quoted by believers more than any other in the Bible. It says, **“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”** In this wonderful phrase, James is telling the early church that it is not just enough to say a prayer, but that our prayers should be fervent (aggressive or passionate) so that they show to our heavenly Father that we are serious about what we are praying for, and that our request is the priority of our hearts. To pray any other way is to present a nonchalant attitude and somewhat careless approach to our prayer life. If the early church was going to experience the healing of God for every kind of illness, then they had to pray with earnestness and sincerity in order to have their prayers answered. Therefore, may we follow their example and pray often in the same way so our prayers will be answered as well. Let’s determine that our prayers will be passionate and not casual with no genuine concern.

6. The prayers of these praying brethren are a patterned prayer.
vs. 17-18

These two verses remind us that Elijah prayed fervently in the Old Testament that it might not rain for over three years, and then he prayed that it might rain again and it rained and the crops brought forth much fruit. This example of Elijah is a pattern for us to follow. If we are going to see our prayers answered during these days of uncertainty, we must pray fervently like Elijah and we must believe God to answer our prayers. And folks, may I say that the future of America is now in the hands of God's people if we are to stop the decline of our country spiritually. Our country is in the worse mess that I have ever seen as I mentioned before, and the only thing that can possibly save it at this point is for God to send an old fashion heaven sent revival in answer to the prayers of God's people. Let's determine that we will follow Elijah's patterned example.

E. He relieves the oppression by the favor of persuasive brethren.
vs. 19-20

After spending much time on the importance of fervent prayer, in these last two verses in this chapter, James seems to attach another thought which becomes a part of the canon of scripture. It is almost like James suddenly thinks about the fact that all those he has been talking to will not obey what he has said. So, he quickly adds that if some people don't obey his words, then those who are living in obedience should help witness to these sinners who are rebelling against God. Therefore, this is almost like James regiving the Great Commission before he stops his letter. He desperately wants the early church that is going through so much suffering to not become so self-centered because of their problems that they forget about soul winning and leading others to Christ. So, if these hurting oppressed people are going to be delivered from their depression, there must be some brethren who will show favor to these lost and disobedient people and share the love of Christ with them.

Conclusion To The Chapter

Wow! What a great study we have had in this chapter of the Book of James. If we have retained all that God has been trying to teach us, then I sincerely believe that we will be able to endure all of the problems we face, and then patiently wait for the coming of Jesus Christ. I am tired of all of the suffering and hardships that come our way down here on earth. But, when I know that the best is yet to come in the future, then I can go on living with hope and a spirit of expectancy.

What about you dearly beloved? Are you living with hope even in the midst of these discouraging time? Have you thought much lately about just giving up and not trying any more? If this is you, why don't you just hang on to the promises of God and refuse to let Satan take away your joy and courage. Even this week in your study maybe you could make a fresh commitment of your life to Christ, spend a lot of renewed time in the Word of God, and also check out your prayer life to see if you are surely praying fervently. Then, why don't you become an intercessor in prayer on behalf of others. Just remember that when we feel that nobody has the problems that we do, we will assuredly find someone else who is worse off than we are. So, let me encourage you to endure your suffering with joy and hope and manifest the genuine Christianity that Jesus wants you and me to display. Hopefully, the in-depth study of this chapter five in James will give you the courage to keep on going on when you just feel like quitting. Don't forget that Jesus never quit and neither should we!

Conclusion To The Book

Believe it or not, we have now come to the end of this several week study of the little Book of James. It is a little book, but it is packed full of great Biblical truth for use in our Christian lives. As we have gone through this material carefully, I pray that you have allowed Jesus to not only challenge you, but I pray also that you have allowed Him to change you. I know that in my preparation to teach this book that God has done some remarkable things in my life.

During the study of these five chapters, we have studied the “Evidence Of Genuine Christianity”, the “Expression Of Genuine Christianity”, the “Exposure Of False Christianity”, the “Eliminations Of Genuine Christianity”, and finally, the “Endurance of Genuine Christianity”. Now, the question that I want to ask all of you is, “Right now are you living a Christian life that definitely demonstrates effectively that you are a genuine Christian?” If you are, then praise God for what God has done in your life. If you aren’t, maybe you need to go back and study this material one more time. I assure you that I am praying that after studying this great little book that others will know for sure that you are real and genuine as a believer in Christ. Time is definitely short and Jesus is coming very soon. Therefore, let’s make sure that we are living in such a way that when He comes, we will not be found ashamed of the way we have lived and the things we have done! Thank you for studying with us through this wonderful material from the infallible Word of God!

