

## Introduction to James

It has become an established custom when teaching a book of the Bible to take some time in introductory comments. These generally include the human author (since the book is inspired the Holy Spirit was speaking through James). Date of composition, background, people to whom written, along with what we know about those receiving the letter, regarding their moral or doctrinal strengths or weaknesses. Anything we know about the letter that is not in the letter, but is somewhere else in Scripture. This is especially true of the letters Paul wrote that were written while Luke was writing his history in the book of Acts.

The reasons why this is important is obvious and can be seen in the following illustration. As you are cleaning out an old desk drawer you find two old letters. One is a letter from your father to your mother when you were 5 years old. It is full of information about your family. People you know about and circumstances you have always wondered about. The second letter was written about the same time, but you do not know the people or the events. The first letter would be very interesting as it would not only have an emotional connection, but you would be able to fill in the gaps in the letter with your own knowledge. The second letter would be much more difficult because there is nothing to remember that we can use to fill in any information that we would need to really understand. The people and places cannot be guessed when personal pronouns are used that the recipients of the letter would know, but are now lost. We would be intrigued, but would end up setting the letter aside with regret because much that we would like to know cannot be answered.

Hence, it is clear that by understanding as much as possible about the background of the book, we put ourselves in a better position to understand the book itself. But the book of James presents some interesting difficulties.

The author is hard to place, the time of writing is impossible from outside and inside sources to determine, the people to whom he is writing could be exclusively Jewish Christians, or churches generally. The truth is that introductory comments on James are most contradictory and frustrating.

About the only thing one can say with certainty about this book (and even then you will find some who would argue it) is that the Holy Spirit is the author, and the citizens of God's kingdom, living under the New Covenant are the recipients.

### Author: James

*James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, James 1:1*

While this passage makes it clear that the author is James, it does not decrease our difficulty. There are two men with this name mentioned in the Scriptures. The first was the brother of the apostle John who along with their father had been partners in a fishing business with Simon called Peter.

*And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, **saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother**, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him. 21 Going on from there, He **saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother**, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. Matt. 4:18-22*

*For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and **so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon**. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." Luke 5:9-10*

James and John became two of Jesus apostles and were prominent in the ministry of Christ, being taken with him to very special events and along with Peter. Why James was mentioned first may have had to do with age or prominence but we don't know.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; **James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;** Matt. 10:2-3

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, **James, and John his brother,** led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2 and He was transfigured before them. Matt. 17:1-2

Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with **James and John.** 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. Mark 1:29-31

Then **James and John, the sons of Zebedee,** came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." Mark 10:35

And **He took Peter, James, and John with Him,** and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. 34 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch." Mark 14:33-34

And when His disciples **James and John saw this,** they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" Luke 9:54

And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, **James, John,** and Andrew; Acts 1:13

Yet, all this information, helps us very little since it is very unlikely that this is the James that wrote this letter. In 44 ad, Herod beheaded this James and his life came to an end. If we date the letter before these events as some do, then the apostle James may be the writer, but it is very unlikely that this is the case.

**Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.** 3 And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Acts 12:2-3

So we now turn our attention to the other men named James that are mentioned in the New Testament. The difficulty here is that there are several men called James and it is difficult to prove that each time this term is used it is speaking of the same person.

Jesus had brothers who were initially hostile to Him. (Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:21; 31-35; Jn. 7:3-9).

Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 21 But **when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."** ... 31 **Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him.** 32 And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." Mk. 3:20-21; 3:31-32

**His brothers therefore said to Him,** "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. 4 For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." 5 **For even His brothers did not believe in Him.** 6 Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. 8 You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come." 9 When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee. John 7:3-9

One of them had the name of James, who was evidently with the apostles just before the church began. Paul appeared to speak of him to the Galatians.

Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and **brother of James,** Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him. Mark 6:3

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and **Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.** Acts 1:14

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. 19 **But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.** 20 (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) Gal. 1:18-20

Is this enough evidence to conclude that this is the James who Jesus appeared to after his resurrection who then went on to take a prominent role in the church, was the one speaking at

the Jerusalem Conference and was the same one spoken about by Paul to the Galatians?

**After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.** 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. 1 Cor 15:7-8

**And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me: 14 Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: Acts 15:13-15**

**On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. 19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. Acts 21:18-20**

**when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. Gal 2:9-10**

**Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. Gal 2:11-13**

Most people have concluded that this is in fact the same person and that he is the author of the book of James. He rose to prominence behind the scenes and then began to take a much more prominent role after the death of James. He evidently stayed in Jerusalem, and worked with the elders on a level high enough that Paul mentioned him to the Galatians. This is the same James that Paul met with when taking the money for the needy saints to Jerusalem.

As noted in the introduction. While it would be satisfying to know the answers to these things, the fact remains that the Holy Spirit is the author of these Scriptures and the human author only satisfies our curiosity and helps us better understand the thinking behind the letter. It is not necessary to know.

## Time of Composition

There is nothing in the letter or in the book of Acts to give us any means to set a date. Since the book of James is a practical epistle, and focuses on the every day life of the Christian, it could have been written at any time. The ups and downs of life, and the temptations that so easily beset us. For this reason, it is a wonderful uplifting letter to those who are interested in fine tuning their spiritual life.

Although it does not focus on doctrine, like Romans, it was rejected by Martin Luther as being a very weak letter because of his misunderstanding of the use James made of Abraham and a working faith in the second chapter.

In his exposition of the First Epistle of St. Peter he writes in 1523: "If one wants to preach the gospel, it must, in short, be on the resurrection of Christ. He who does not do that is no apostle; for this is the main part of the gospel. And those are the right, noblest books, which teach and impress this, as stated above. Hence one can well feel that the Epistle of James is no right apostolic epistle, for there is hardly a thing of this in it." (Lenski, Richard C. H., New Testament Commentaries)

... In sum: the gospel and the first epistle of St. John, St. Paul's epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians; and St. Peter's first epistle, are the books which show Christ to you. They teach everything you need to know for your salvation even if you were never to see or hear any other book or hear any other teaching. In comparison with these they epistle of James is an epistle full of straw, because it contains nothing evangelical. But more about this in other prefaces. ... In direct opposition to Paul and to the rest of the Bible it ascribes justification to works, quoting Abraham wrongly as one who was justified by his works. This in itself proves that the epistle cannot be of apostolic origin. (Barclay, William "Daily Study Bible" vol 14 p 7)

Though Martin Luther through a misunderstanding of the nature of grace and works and the NT

rejected the book of James as an inspired epistle, a deep study of his rejection leaves it unscathed. The difficult Scriptures of Paul were wrested for him to draw that conclusion (II Pet 3:14-16). All in all I believe we will find James to be a fascinating epistle which in every way fits like a glove on the hand of the teachings of our Lord in the gospels and of the other inspired writers of the NT Scriptures.

## James One

- 1 Salutation and introduction  
2-3 You must have “all joy when you encounter “various trials”  
4-8 Ask for wisdom to find this joy.  
9-11 Dealing with the trials of adversity or prosperity.  
12 Blessed are those who endure their trials.  
13-18 Viewing God clearly and according to the truth during trials.  
A. The proper understanding of God when being tempted to sin. 13-16  
B. God only gives good things. Never mistake the bad as coming directly from Him. (Don't make Job's mistake) 17-18  
19-20 Keeping all this in mind, be careful, how you hear (be swift), how you speak (be slow), and how you become angry (be slow).  
21-25 Conclusion: Prove yourselves doers of the Word and not just hearers only. Context: Be sure to do it while enduring trials.  
26-27 Summation: Watch the tongue, help others in their afflictions and keep yourself pure.

### **1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,**

As was just mentioned in the introduction, there are two James' to which this can refer. Either the apostle James, the brother of the apostle John who was beheaded by Herod in Acts 12 in the year 44 AD, or the brother of Jesus Christ who was converted after His resurrection and became a great influence in the church at Jerusalem. (See the comments in the introduction for a fuller description). Since the real author is the Holy Spirit, and we are therefore in no danger regarding the human author, and since the vast majority have concluded it is the latter James, we will speak of him in this first section. Though the gospels record unbelief on the part of his brothers (John 7:3-5), I Cor 15:7 gives the reason for their change of heart. Why Jesus would appear to him may strike some as strange, but it must have been very difficult for these devout Jews to believe that the older brother they had known since childhood was actually the Messiah. Jesus felt for whatever reason that James deserved a special visit. What an inspiring thing that must have been for him. Yet in spite of all this, he here prefers to call himself the “servant” of the Lord:

*“doulos... 1. a slave, bondman, man of servile condition... a. properly... b. metaph. aa. one who gives himself up wholly to another's will... gg. doulos tinos devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests...”* (Thayer, p. 157-158; 1401)

For James, and all the devout who have ever lived, this is the highest of all honors God bestows upon mankind. To be a bondservant of Jesus is the most uplifting and honorable opportunity God has ever given to man after the fall. When one serves a “Lord” he is under his protection and power:

*“kurios... having power or authority... he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding; master, lord; used a... of the possessor and disposer of a thing, the owner... in the state, the sovereign, prince, chief...”* (Thayer, p. 365-366; 2962)

The greater the power of the Lord, the greater the protection and honor bestowed upon the servants.

### **to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad,**

The recipients of the letter are as difficult to identify as the author. Because James used the term “twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad,” many have concluded that this is a letter written

exclusively to Jewish Christians. If it was written before the conversion of the Gentiles, then it would make perfect sense that he would only be addressing Jewish Christians. But if it were written after that time, why would he limit the book in this way? There is no difference at all between a Jewish and a Gentile Christian. Once baptized, we are all Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise in a very special way. All of us are now children of Abraham in the same way that Isaac was. Whether born a Jew or a Gentile, baptism removes all distinctions! We are all children of promise and not children of the flesh.

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gal. 3:26-29*

*Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Gal. 4:28-30*

Paul made it very clear that God never intended for there to be any distinction in Christians. That is one of the reasons why God did not command circumcision immediately.

*Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised. Rom 4:9-12*

*Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. Gal. 3:7*

If at the time of writing, there were no Gentile Christians then I would heartily concur that James is only writing to Israel, but once the Gentiles were called, this designation could no longer refer exclusively to Jews. There is nothing that the Holy Spirit required of a Jewish Christian that is not also required of a Gentile Christian.

The term "scattered" was used of the Jewish people in the Greek Septuagint to refer to those dispersed by foreign kings and especially Babylon:

*"diaspora... a scattering, dispersion... in the Sept. used of the Israelites dispersed among foreign nations... esp of their Babylonian exile... Transferred to Christians [i.e. Jewish Christians(?)] scattered abroad among the Gentiles... James 1:1 sojourners far from home, in Pontus... I Pet 1:1..." (Thayer, p. 141-142; 1290)*

There is a rich heritage behind this term and it is important for Christians to understand it. The concept was introduced by God to describe what He was going to do to Israel if they rebelled against Him.

*"Then **the LORD will scatter you among all peoples**, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known-- wood and stone. Deut 28:64*

Later Moses added more details and promised that God would bring back those who are scattered.

*"Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and **you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you**, 2 **"and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul,** 3 **"that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 "If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. 5 "Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you***

and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.” Deut 30:1-6

While the Jews focused on the first return which occurred at the time of Cyrus when Jews returned and rebuilt the temple under the guidance of Zerubbabel and Joshua, Christians focus on the second gathering.

**And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious.” 11 It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea. 12 He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. ... 16 There will be a highway for the remnant of His people Who will be left from Assyria, As it was for Israel In the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.** Isa 11:10-12, 16

This second gathering would be for the Jew first and also for the Greek. The book of Acts records exactly how God sought for His sheep and placed them under shepherds (the elders of the church) who were under the chief shepherd David.

**‘For thus says the Lord God: “Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. 13 And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God. 16 “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.”** Ezek 34:11-16

**“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the Lord. 2 Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: “You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,” says the Lord. 3 “But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4 I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,” says the Lord.** Jer. 23:1-4

Also in this second gathering, God will take out the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh. At that same moment, God would also give them the Holy Spirit.

**“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. 23 And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. 24 For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. 28 Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. 29 I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. 30 And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. 31 Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your**

**abominations. 32 Not for your sake do I do this,” says the Lord God, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!” Ezek. 36:22-32**

## **2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,**

James begins his book with one of the most complicated and perilous of the things confronting Christians. Yet instead of explaining why these trials occur, he simply revealed how we are to think about them and what they can accomplish. What should our attitude be toward the many different trials, troubles and difficulties that enter into our lives without warning? “*All joy considering, my brethren,*” is James literal answer. When these trials enter unexpectedly into our lives, our first response should be “*all joy.*”

“*pas*,... I. adjectivally, and 1. with anarthrous nouns; a. *any, every one* (sc. of the class denoted by the noun annexed to *pas*);... *all or any* of the class indicated... b. *any and every, of every kind*, ... esp. with nouns designating virtues or vices, emotions, character, condition, to indicate every mode in which such virtue, vice or emotion manifests itself, c. *the whole ...*” (Thayer, p. 491-493; 3956).

“*chara*... *joy, gladness*; ... b. by meton. *the cause or occasion of joy*...” (Thayer, p. 664-665; 5479)

“*chara ... joy, delight*” (akin to *chairō*, “*to rejoice*”), ...” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:5479)

Every form and quality of joy, gladness and delight would generally be reserved only for the best days of our life. Days filled with blessings and prosperity and good news. For these same emotions to be generated and directed toward every kind of trial is going to take some serious rethinking. The paradox of seeing bad things as good and feeling the same joy toward them is going to need some powerful reasons and motivations.

How can we “*consider*” it joyful when terrible things occur? This is a term that describes our ability to think, add up and conclude. These are not based on “*inner feeling or sentiment,*” but only on “*due consideration of external grounds.*” It requires a more “*deliberate and careful assessment.*”

“*hegeomai*... 2. i.q. *to consider, deem, account, think*...” *hegeomai* and *nomizo* denote a belief resting not on one’s inner feeling or sentiment, but on the due consideration of external grounds, the weighing and comparing, of facts; *dokeo* and *oiomai*, on the other hand, describe a subjective judgment growing out of inclination or a view of facts in their relation to us. *hegeomai* denotes a more deliberate and careful judgment than *nomizo*; *oiomai*, a subjective judgment which has feeling rather than thought (*dokeo*) for its ground. (Cf. Schmidt, chapter 17.)...” (Thayer, p. 276; 2233)

Hence within the command is the necessity of making the proper assessment and determination of all the facts until joy in the midst of trials is the only logical and natural response. The consideration of the trial is a natural response. Whenever something bad happens to us, we seek to determine the cause and the affect. Who was responsible for this and how did it happen. What is lacking for most Christians would be the joy. But after it is all added up and everything has been considered every trial has something about it that will bring joy.

Since the term “*trial*” has as it’s basic meaning “*an experiment*” or “*test,*” It covers anything that tests our faith and fidelity.

“*peirasmōs*... *an experiment, attempt, trial, proving*... a. univ. *trial proving*... b. spec. *the trial of man’s fidelity, integrity, virtue, constancy*... also *an enticement to sin, temptation*, ... of a condition of things, or a mental state, by which we are enticed... *adversity, affliction, trouble*... sent by God and serving to test or prove one’s faith, holiness, character... c. ‘*temptation*’ (i.e. *trial*) of God by men, i. e. rebellion against God, by which his power and justice are, as it were, put to the proof and challenged to show themselves...” (Thayer, p. 499; 3986)

*peirasmós* masc. noun from *peirázō* (3985), to make trial of, try, tempt. Trial, temptation, a putting to the test, spoken of persons only. When God is the agent, *peirasmós* is for the purpose of proving someone, never for the purpose of causing him to fall. If it is the devil who tempts, then it is for the purpose of causing one to fall. (I) Generally, trial of one’s character (1Peter 4:12, “to try [or prove] you”). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:3986)

When we look at its uses in the Scriptures it is a very broad word group. It covers three realms. The first are those tests God Himself uses. It was the way God tested Abraham and later Israel in the wilderness. These are tests God hopes we will succeed and pass through safely. Abraham could certainly rejoice after God gave Isaac back to him.

The second way are the simple acts of time and chance that come into our lives. The accidents, troubles and sorrows that enter our lives because we live in a sin cursed world.

*I returned and saw under the sun that — The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all. 12 For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, Like birds caught in a snare, So the sons of men are snared in an evil time, When it falls suddenly upon them. Eccl. 9:11-12*

These are things that just overwhelmed us without any warning. One minute they are not there and the next minute they are all around us.

The third type of trials are those designed by Satan in hopes that we will fail and sin. These were the temptations Eve endured in the garden and Jesus endured after His forty day fast. These are not included here, but will be described separated later in the chapter. (Jas. 1:12-15).

James makes it clear that he is only discussing those trails Here it is confined to those events we “fall into.”

The main sense of *peripipto* is “to come on something accidentally,” Hdt., VI, 105, “to be innocently involved in something,” commonly with *mishaps* etc., Eur. Or., 367, also “to be overturned,” “to sink,” Plut. Anton., 67 (l, 947 b). ... The noun *periptoma* means “mishap.” (Kittel TDWNT NT:4045)

By using this term, James limits these trials we come upon accidentally and innocently. They were not directed. They did not come as a result of internal decisions as described with the temptations James will speak of in verse 12. But any trial that we endure that we don't know its source fits under the term “*various*.”

*“poikilos ... many-colored, spotted, mottled, pied, dappled, of leopards, fawns, Hom., etc. II. of robes, wrought in various colours, broided, ... III. metaph. changeful, various, diversified, manifold, Aesch., Plat.:- (Liddell and Scott, Greek Lexicon. NT:4164)*

It is difficult to limit this term. Every type and variety of trial is under consideration. Although we know different what Job endured would fall directly under James words here. They were various trials where he lost his possessions and family. Later he also lost he health, reputation and well-being. All of these would be a part of the “*many-colored, mottled,*” and “*manifold*” nature of the trials James is discussing.

God obviously wants us to view trials in a very different way than the world views them. If we view trials the way the world views them then it would be impossible for us to consider them all joy. So we have to find a way to look at trials that will lead us in the end to feel joy.

Look at the similarity between how Jesus commands us to look at the trials of persecution. Some of the worst trials come from the things Jesus described. We are told that hatred, reviling, exclusions and persecutions can bring great blessings to us and that because of these blessings, we can see the trials as bringing joy. Peter used this same reasoning as he spoke of the fiery trial that was to come upon them.

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 **Rejoice and be exceedingly glad**, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

*Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. 23 **Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!** For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. Luke 6:22-23*

*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange*

*thing happened to you; 13 but **rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.** 1 Peter 4:12-14*

Jesus asked us to look at the the return and the reward. What appears to be a loss and great sorrow when looked at only from this world becomes a great reward in heaven in the life to come. So joy in trials is a manifestation and reflection of our faith in the words of our Lord.

Yet the term “*trials*” is not limited only to those endured under persecution from faithful service to God. It also works for all tribulations. Whenever our life closes in on us and we don't know where to turn, we are in a tribulation. It should lead to joy.

*And not only that, but **we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.** 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5:3-5*

*Not that I speak in regard to need, **for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.** 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Phil 4:11-13*

*And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 **Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.** 2 Cor 12:7-10*

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though **our outward man is perishing**, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 **For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,** 18 **while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.** For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Cor 4:16-18*

All forms of adversity and tribulation are under consideration. Anything that we fall into that causes sorrow and loss can be viewed in this light. When we fall into adversity, we are given an opportunity to prove what we are made of. This requires great faith and trust in God to view things in this manner. It is a great leap of maturity when we can do so. Consider this carefully next time we are in a grievous circumstance and you have to decide how you are going to react to it. This is not speaking of the sorrow of the event itself.

We will often grieve at the loss of whatever quality it might be, but what will we do with it spiritually? Will we lash out in anger at God, will we doubt Him or His wisdom and love? Or will we recognize that this is an opportunity to once again be made aware that this life is not all there is, that God allows things here that will never re-occur in heaven because the world is sin-cursed and the free-will of man reigns supreme.

Regardless of our previous understanding of trials and difficulties, we must be transformed and learn how to accomplish this.

*I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.** Rom 12:1-2*

This will be a great transformation. It encompasses our understanding of material blessings and our reason for continuing to live in this life. How do we view our possessions, health and prosperity? Are they such a critical part of life that we feel a great loss and sorrow when a trial removes them? Our response to trials manifests our priorities, because the truth is that this life is a preparation for the one to come. Which one is the most important and takes the most time and effort tells us how spiritually or materially minded one is. Trials are going to come into the

lives of all men. Such trials are a useful setback to those who are too materially minded, and are a means of joy and peace for those who are not. Why is this the case? Because those who are spiritually minded have reached a point where they deem these setbacks and trials as a necessary means of showing them the temporary and uncontrollable nature of this life.

Jesus warned us against putting too much importance to this life (Mt. 6:19-34). He also warned us to beware of covetousness. No one's life does consists of what he possesses.

*And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." Luke 12:15*

*Consider the work of God; For who can make straight what He has made crooked? 14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, But in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, So that man can find out nothing that will come after him. Eccl 7:13-14*

The way we respond to trials will reveal to us exactly how far we have come in our view of life. It is easy to become greedy and allow our expectations of how we should enjoy this life to become a "care of the world" that can choke the word. When we can accept trials and loss and still feel joy, then we know we are not in danger of these things.

### **3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.**

James now narrows down our inquiry to one central consideration that will create our reason to feel joy. There is something we need to "know." This is the term used when we are speaking about "intelligent comprehension of an object or matter." It is "a knowledge grounded in personal experience," but it may be being gained for the first time, or it may be perceiving it again and gaining even more insight.

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*ginosko...* denotes in ordinary Greek the intelligent comprehension of an object or matter, whether this comes for the first time, or comes afresh, into the consideration of the one who grasps it (“to come to know,” “to experience,” “to perceive [again]”) or whether it is already present (“to perceive”). (Kittel TDWNT NT:1097).

As a present active participle, this is knowledge that is always right in the forefront of the mind, where he can use it at any moment. First, comes the blast of shock and concern, then comes the calm and deliberate decision to see it as a reason to rejoice. This will not be the natural way we look at tribulations and trials. So every trial now becomes an opportunity to remember this knowledge.

One single fact that we need to be “knowing” at all times is that every trial is a “test” of our faith”

*dokimion...* 1. *the proving...* 2. *that by which something is tried or proved, a test...* in Sept. of a crucible or furnace for smelting...” (Thayer, p. 155; 1383)

The stem word is *doke* “watching” ... *dokimos* ... as an adjective both of person and object thus denotes a. “tested in battle,” “reliable,” “trustworthy,” b. “a man who is tested, significant, recognized, esteemed, worthy” ... or “an object which is tested, genuine or valuable” ... *dokimion* is the neuter of an adjective *dokimios* “tested,” “genuine” In the substantive form, it has the same meaning as the older ... “means of testing,” (Kittel TDWNT, NT:1383)

Peter is the only other writer in the New Testament who uses this term, and he uses it in such a similar manner that it is very helpful to consider.

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the **genuineness (proof ASV NASB)** of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1Pet. 1:6-7*

How do these various trials “test” faith. We can all speak of our love and devotion to God and of our desire to serve Him even to the point of losing our life. But when trials of various sorts come they test the veracity of those statements. We can read about Job in the Scriptures and tell ourselves that we would remain faithful during such terrible ordeals, but when they come, we can rejoice because we know that know our words and our convictions are being tested.

It is easy to quote Paul and proclaim that we know everything that happens to us can work out to our good.

*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Rom. 8:28*

When the time comes to prove our words true, we should have a sense of anticipation. Now we have the chance to learn from experience. Now we can go through these trials and after coming out of them truly see that they **DO** work out for good!

Trials are an opportunity to show God what we are made of, and that our faith will not waver in Him in the slightest. Every time we pass through tribulations we realize that our faith has not failed us and it has not failed God. This is what Peter was revealing in his first epistle. What is being produced during this time is more precious than gold. So Abraham must have felt as he

was offering up Isaac.

Tribulations prove faith. How can we show our faith to God without adversity and trials? The sad answer is that in this present life, the only way to manifest great faith is by great persecution, trial and loss. In this way Job was tested by God and Satan and showed his great faith in God. If we realize that each occurrence is a proving and that with the passing of each test comes a further guarantee of a genuine faith, we can become joyful. There is another aspect of this. Even if we are struggling with the trial, there can still be joy because we are gaining endurance.

### **produces endurance.**

This is the heart of why we should have joy when we pass through a trial. It brings us something we can in no other way produce. The only way to gain endurance is by passing through such trials. There is no other way to get it. The term “produce” is defined:

*“katergazomai... a. to perform, accomplish, achieve [RV often work]... b. to work out... i.e. to do that from which something results... bring about, result in,... c. ... to fashion, i.e. render one fit for a thing...”* (Thayer, P. 339; 2716)

*“katergazomai... found from the time of Soph., means a. “to bear down to the ground,” “to overcome,” b. “to work at,” “make.” Refined by constant use, it gradually takes on the sense of the simple, so that the verb signifies working at, and finally accomplishing, a task. It is used in agriculture and in the making of materials,...”* (Kittel, TDWNT; NT:2716)

Trials do something from which patience results. They bring about and result in patience. Just like sandpaper results in a smooth piece of wood, or a rake produces smooth ground, trials produce patience in the heart and soul. Consider how Paul described the process:

*And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5:3-5*

Paul rejoiced and was proud of his tribulations. They produced patience and patience produced character, and character produced hope. As Christians pass through trials they look back on the ones passed as mountains already climbed. They are a badge of honor and a testimony to character. They give hope and they give greater patience to do more in the future. The term patience is defined:

*“hupomone... 1. steadfastness, constancy, endurance... in the N. T. the characteristic of a man who is unswerving from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings... 2. a patient, steadfast waiting for... 3. a patient enduring, sustaining...”* (Thayer, p. 644; 5281)

*“hupomeno... 2. to remain i.e. abide, not recede or flee; troop. a. to persevere: absol. and emphatic. under misfortunes and trials to hold fast to one’s faith in Christ... b. to endure bravely, bear bravely and calmly: absol., ill-treatment...”* (Thayer, p. 644; 5278)

The term *hupo* means “under” and the term “*mone*” means to “remain” or “to abide.” so *hupo-mone* means to remain or abide under something. When trials come we often have to make the choice of whether to remain under them or to bail out. Bailing out means lack of character and weakness and remaining under them means strength of character and power over life.

Patience is the ability to remain under trails and tribulations and not bail out of them. It gives the power and the reasons to remain under trials without wavering and often without complaining because having been there before, we know it has an end, that it produces great benefits in our character that far outweigh the temporary unhappiness presently being endured, and that we can do it.

The Hebrew writer uses two analogies. The first is the only way to run further is to run with endurance. The more we endure today, the further we can run tomorrow. Endurance produces

more endurance. The second is that of a father chastening and disciplining his son. The more he disciplines the more he can endure.

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us**, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, **who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame**, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 **For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls**. 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." 7 **If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons**; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Heb 12:1-9*

James follows this truth with another command:

#### **4 But let patience have its perfect work**

We know this is a command because James placed it in the imperative mode. While our translators chose "let patience have," they could have also used "make patience have." Clearly the command to "have" means that is something we must make happen. "Have" is a very broad word for possession.

"echo... . Transitively. 1. *to have* i. q. *to hold*; a. *to have(hold) in the hand*: ... b. in the sense of *wearing*... c. trop. *to have* (hold) *possession* of the mind; said of alarm, agitating emotions... d. *to hold fast, keep*... e. *to have* (in itself or as a consequence), *comprise, involve*... f... *to regard, consider, hold as*... 2. *to have* . q. *to own, possess*; a. external things such as pertain to property, riches, furniture, utensils, goods, food, etc. II. Intransitively. . . *to hold one's self to* a thing, *to lay hold of* a thing, *to adhere* or *cling to*; to be closely joined to a person or thing... *near, adjoining, neighboring, bordering, next*..." (Thayer, p. 265-268; 2192).

"echo... 1. This verb is used more than 700 times in the NT, esp. in the Gospels (Matthew 75 times, Mark 72 times, Luke 78 times, John 88 times), which is related to their lively narrative style. Among the NT writings the Johannine literature is particularly prominent (thus 1 John about 28 times, Revelation about 101 times). 2. The verb has a great breadth of meaning: *have, keep, possess*; aor.: *acquire, take possession*; intrans.: *be, be situated* ..." (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament NT:2192)

When our trials come, and we meet them with faith and trust, they will create patience/perseverance. But since patience / perseverance is only the ability to remain under trials, in and of itself, it cannot bring the desired result of joy, contentment and maturity. Only when we have the perspective given here and by Paul in Romans can we "let patience have and possess a perfect work. But it is only within our will and desire that we can allow perseverance to bring us to perfection (maturity). How do we let it do that? Two things. First, we always remember that trials bring perseverance and that leads secondly to our rejoicing while we are in their midst. Look at the process again:

*And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5:3-5*

First, we glory (exult and feel joy and a sense of pride) as we enter a tribulation (pressure). The joy and exultation comes because we know it produces perseverance. We must also learn and keep foremost in our minds that this perseverance is only one link in the chain. Next comes character and finally hope. Only by properly enduring the trials can we produce the character God wants to see within us and only when we have that can we have hope.

*Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Heb. 12:8*

It is this process of tribulation and chastening that we must allow perseverance to produce the

perfect “work” (peaceable fruit of righteousness)

“*ergon*... 1. *business, employment, that with which anyone is occupied*... 2. *any product whatever, any thing accomplished by hand, art, industry, mind*... 3. *an act, deed, thing done: ...*” (Thayer, p. 248; 2041)

*ergon* ... *business, ... 2. of works of industry, tilled lands, fields, farms, Hom.*; ... then, generally, *property, wealth, possessions, ... b. of women’s work, weaving, ... c. of other occupations, fishing, as a way of life, ... in Att. also of all kinds of works, such as mines, iron-works, ...*” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT: 2041)

In every realm of life what comes of work is results. If it is a farm, it is a harvest. If it is fishing it is fish and if it is mining, it is ore. If it is trials, it is endurance and if it is endurance it is maturity. But we must let this happen. We can short circuit the process with anger, bitterness or loss of faith. It is up to us to bring our joy to this effort.

If through proper efforts, we bring the joy, the product in our heart will be perfection. Hence, in two quick steps James has taken us from infancy to maturity. We begin our lives as Christians with faith. Faith comes by hearing God’s word, and we can gain more and more of it by going listening. Patience comes through trials. The trials of life should be joyfully met by the child of faith because they are the quickest route to patience and patience is the quickest route to “maturity.”

“*teleios*,... *brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect*... substantively, that which is perfect: of men, full-grown, adult; of full age, mature,... of mind and character, one who has reached the proper height of virtue and integrity...” (Thayer, p. 618).

“*teleios* and *teleos*, ... *having reached its end, finished, complete, II.*, etc.: of victims, *perfect, without spot or blemish, ... 2. of animals, fullgrown, Xen.*, etc. 3. of persons, *absolute, complete, accomplished, perfect in his or its kind, 4. of prayers, vows, etc., fulfilled, accomplished*, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon)

While perfection is one of its meanings, you can see from the definitions that it is a fluid term. A *full grown* animal, a *complete* or *accomplished* person, or fulfilled and *accomplished* prayers and vows. If I want God to see me as I ought to be then I will need to pass through all the various trials of life with joy and contentment and not bitterness or lack of faith.

**that you may be perfect and complete,**

With a “final conjunction” James takes all the previous thoughts on joyful trials and brings the “purpose,” “intent,” and “end.”

“*hina*... II a final conjunction(for from local direction, indicated by the adverb, the transition was easy to mental direction or intention) denoting purpose and end: *to the intent that; to the end that, in order that*;... it is used 1. prop of the purpose or end...” (Thayer, p. 302-304; 2443)

The end result of counting all trials joy, of knowing that trials produce patience, and of letting patience lead us on to perfect work is that we will be perfect and complete. He repeats the same word defined above: “*brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect*” and then adds “*complete*.”

“*holokleros*... *complete in all its parts, in no part wanting or unsound, complete, entire, whole, ... of a body, without blemish or defect, whether of a priest or of a victim*... Ethically, *free from sin, faultless, ... complete in all respects, consummate*...” (Thayer, p. 443; 3648)

“*holokleros*... a totality, with special emphasis upon the entity as a whole - ‘whole, entire.’ (Lou & Nida Greek English Lexicon NT:3648)

*holokleros* ... denotes completeness in extent or compass, and is thus a term of quantity rather than quality. ... “Whole,” of vessels.” (Kittel TDWNT NT: 3648).

With this synonym, we have perfection both in quality and quantity. Clearly, in the eyes of God our response to trials is a very important. It shouldn’t surprise us after reading Job, that God

needs more than faith from His servants.

*If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small. Prov 24:10*

*For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. Heb 10:36-39*

In the sin cursed world in which we live, God needs servants who can handle the stresses and strains of life. God can't fix every unfair thing that occurs due to sin and His gracious dealings with others.

*There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. Eccl 8:14*

*I have seen everything in my days of vanity: There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, And there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness. Eccl 7:15*

*Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. 3 For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ... 13 Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. 14 For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning. 15 If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. 16 When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me — 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. Ps. 73:1-3, 13-17*

When we are able to count all our trials and tribulations as joyous events that prove and strengthen us, we have moved beyond one of the greatest threats to our spiritual growth. As Jesus noted in the parable of the sower, of all who obey the gospel, trials and tribulations will take a great toil.

*But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Mt. 13:20-21*

*But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation (same as trial here) fall away. Lk. 8:13-14*

So there is no exaggeration here. As long as we are unprepared to meet trials, Satan can "sift us like wheat." As Job and the prophets, Satan has found persecution and terrible trials an effective tool to hinder or ever stop the progress of the righteous. If we want to become all that the gospel has to power to make of us, this is one of the greatest steps. Very precious and exceeding great promises are given here to the people of God if they count their trials a joy and know that they produce patience. But James is not quite finished.

### **lacking nothing.**

Lest we think that somehow our understanding up to this point in the book is too much, James now also addresses it negatively. Not only will it make us perfect and entire, but it will also keep us from "lacking" anything. James joins to universal terms. "Lacking" is only used to describe things that are forsaken, left behind or destitute. When we don't possess something necessary to completion, we have a lack that will lead to the loss of what we sought to accomplish.

*"leipo... 1. trans. to leave, leave behind, forsake; pass. to be left behind(prop. by one's rival in a race, hence), a. to lag, be inferior... b. to be destitute of, to lack... 2. intrans to be wanting or absent, to fail..." (Thayer, p. 375; 3007)*

*"leipo... a: to not possess something which is necessary - 'to not have, to be in need of, to lack.' 'if there is a fellow believer, man or woman, who needs clothes and has nothing to eat each day' James 2:15; (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon NT:3007)*

*leipo... . To leave, forsake, fail, be wanting or deficient. Intrans. to fail, lack, be wanting (Luke 18:22; Titus 1:5; 3:13). In the pass., leípomai , to be deficient in or destitute of, forsaken of, to lack (James 1:5; ...)* (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT: 3007)

Without this ability we truly will be wanting and deficient. Something essential will be unavailable and we will be destitute. But if we can respond to trials as James has revealed, then we will be wanting, deficient and destitute in *“nothing.”* This too is a *absolute* term. It is used when there is no one, nothing, or none. Hence joined to the noun lacking, it means there is nothing lacking.

*“medeis,... it is used either in connection with a noun, no, none, or absolutely, no one, not one, no man, neut. nothing,... a. with an imperative: MEDEIS being the person to whom something is forbidden... [A. V. have thou nothing to do with etc.],”* (Thayer, p. 411; 3367).

There is some amazing promises and powerful information here. But for some, joy in trials and tribulations are one of the final mountains to climb to spiritual maturity. Added to revelation, there is one more step that we can take to reach this pinnacle. Whenever we can't understand something clearly revealed in the Scriptures, it is a clear sign of lack of wisdom. If we have any such lack of wisdom, we can pray for enlightenment.

### **5 But if any of you lacks wisdom,**

Once again, James repeats the word from the previous verse. If we can master the steps outlined by James of counting it all joy when falling into manifold trials because we know it will make us perfect and we will not be lacking in anything. Since these are inspired words there is not doubt to their truth, but we may *“lack”* the wisdom necessary to see it.

So we must now make a careful assessment. If we are still unable to see any joy in our trials, the first thing we must look at is where the faith is coming from that is necessary for us to believe it. Since faith comes by hearing the word of God, perhaps we have not seen all the Scriptures that would round out the knowledge necessary for us to have the joy. So we look at Job, all the prophets, Jesus and His apostles and our brethren. We see that trials and tribulations bring such great blessings that they should lead us to joy. But we still can't seem to muster it. That's when we start praying for the wisdom necessary to take the light and apply it to the darkness that is keeping us from seeing the truth.

So the final step will always be this. When we have the truth, have the faith, but can't make the application, we start praying for *“wisdom.”*

*“sophia, ... wisdom, broad and full intelligence,... used of the knowledge of very divers matters, so that the shade of meaning in which the word is taken must be discovered from the context in every particular case. a. the wisdom which belongs to men... the varied knowledge of things human and divine, acquired by acuteness and experience... skill in the management of affairs... an acquaintance with divine things and human duties, joined to a power of discoursing concerning them and of interpreting and applying sacred Scripture...”* (Thayer, p. 581-582; 4678)

This is such a broad word and used in every language of the world that we must rely more on Scripture for the definition. In every culture there is a word to describe the ability to apply the knowledge of simple things to the complex. When we have mastered this we have wisdom. This same concept is also in the Scriptures. It is the ability to take the knowledge of God's word and skillfully apply it to our life and the lives of others.

The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes were both written to give God's people a broad knowledge and understanding. Consider just a few passages to grasp the concept.

*The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: 2 To know wisdom and instruction, To perceive the words of understanding, 3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, Justice, judgment, and equity; 4 To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion — 5 A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, 6 To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their*

riddles. **7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction. Pr. 1:1-7**

**My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, 2 So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; 3 Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, 4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God. 6 For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding; 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; 8 He guards the paths of justice, And preserves the way of His saints. 9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice, Equity and every good path. 10 When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul, 11 Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, Pr. 2:1-11**

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. 8 It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones. Pr. 3:5-8**

**Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; 14 For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold. 15 She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. 16 Length of days is in her right hand, In her left hand riches and honor. 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace. 18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her. Pr. 3:13-18**

**Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. 7 Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. 8 Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her. 9 She will place on your head an ornament of grace; A crown of glory she will deliver to you." Pr. 4:5-9**

**"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. 11 For by me your days will be multiplied, And years of life will be added to you. 12 If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, And if you scoff, you will bear it alone." Pr. 9:10-12**

How do we sum all of these things into one whole? Wisdom is the ability to take all that we know about God and His expectations and properly apply them to our present circumstances. It is the ability to make the right decisions at the right time to receive a good outcome. It is the ability to see a problem, find the cause of the problem, and take the steps to solve the problem.

Since God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the same wisdom that understands the material realm and successfully works will also apply to the spiritual and moral realm. God did not make them separate. They work in tandem and harmony with one another. When one is out of kilter so will be the other.

Wisdom will bring all the facts and truths regarding trials and tribulations into a clear path leading to joy. Once we know how God wants us to go about it, then we must gain the wisdom to do it in the right way. In doing it the right way, we will always be successful.

If we lack this, then we are in a dangerous position, but God has an answer for us. If we lack this quality concerning trials, patience, and perfection, then this is what God wants us to do.

**let him ask of God,**

God wants us to ask Him for help. Simple, clear, concise, and easy to accomplish. There is no Christian who has ever lived that would find this too hard to do. We might forget it, rebel against it, doubt it and give up, but no one can say this is too hard to do or to understand.

The simplicity of this answer is so clear that it should astound, amaze, and shame us. If this is

all there is to it, then why are we not all experts? Either ignorance or rebellion. Yet God guarantees that if we do this, He will give us the ability to do all He has set forth.

By repeating the imperative mode, James continues to give commands, just as Jesus told His apostles to do (Mt 28:20). If we lack the wisdom to have the joy we are commanded to ask for it. This is not a suggestion, but a command. This term for ask is both submissive and compliant. This is not a demand, but a request from the inferior to the superior.

*“aiteo... to ask mid. to ask for one’s self, request for one’s self...” (Thayer, p. 17; 154)*

*“aiteo ... is more submissive and suppliant, indeed the constant word for the seeking of the inferior from the superior (Acts 12:20); of the beggar from him that should give alms (Acts 3:2); of the child from the parent (Matt 7:9; Luke 6:11; Lam 4:4); of the subject from the ruler (Ezra 8:22); (Trench’s Synonyms of the NT; 154)*

Jesus used this same term in the Sermon on the Mount to assure His disciples that everything God has offered to give us, when we ask for it, we have His solemn promise that He will do it for us. Every step of the way we see that faith is necessary component to make this happen.

**“ASK, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who ASKS receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son ASKS for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he ASKS for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ASK Him!” Mt. 7:7-12**

Paul broadened this out by asking it for them. Obviously in letting them know he was asking, he is inferring that he wants us to be asking these same things, for ourselves and others.

*Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power Eph. 1:15-20*

*For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; Col. 1:9-12*

Although James is not speaking specifically of this command later in the book, it too is a powerful indictment of the nature of our faith to pass it by and not to comment on it here. What does it say about us if we don’t ask? It is obvious why we won’t receive if we don’t ask.

*You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ASK. 3 You ASK and do not receive, because you ASK amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Jas. 4:2-4*

### **who gives to all men generously and without reproach,**

This is a wonderful promise that adds to Jesus words above. Just as anyone among us *“if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” Mt. 7:7-12*

There is no more important area of faith than we find here. If we don’t believe this, we truly are a double minded man who will receive nothing from the Lord. This is not a saving faith. A saving faith believes what God says without question and accepts His promises with great comfort and

assurance. So we can count on God to “give” if we ask.

“*didomi... to give... A. absolutely and generally... B. In construction... I to give something to some one, - in various senses; 1. of one’s own accord to give one something, to his advantage; to bestow; give as a gift... 2. to grant, give to one asking, let have... 3. to supply, furnish, necessary things... 4. to give over, deliver, ... 5. to give what is due or obligatory, to pay: wages or reward...*” (Thayer, p. 145-147; 1325)

This is a word used over 300 times in the New Testament to describe what we give to others and what others give to us. It is the word used in John 3:16 of God giving His son and it is used in 1Tim 2:6 of Jesus giving himself as ransom. It is used here of God’s desire to bestow, give as a gift, grant, give to the one asking, let them have, supply and furnish wisdom. We don’t need to look any further than what God did for Solomon to see what God has the ability to do.

*At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?" 6 And Solomon said: "You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 7 Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. 8 And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. 9 Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" 10 The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11 Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, 12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. 1 Kings 3:5-13*

*And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. 30 Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all men — than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. 33 Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. 34 And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon. 1Kings 4:29-34*

This is a clear example of what God can do if we trust Him and we ask Him. There is no doubt that Solomon was a different man after the prayer than he was before it. If we have faith and do not doubt we too will be different! The gift is bestowed based on the asking, not on the study, effort or toil that we put in. The study toil and effort is necessary to fulfill the command, but the wisdom to make the applications comes from the asking, not from the effort alone.

This is a promise! One that God has given with only one condition, **ask in faith**. If we do our part then we have God’s promise that He will give it to us liberally. This is a complicated word and it is only used here in the NT. Although in its verb form it does contain the sense of liberal, in the adverb, that is only a portion of its meaning. The real idea is that of “*sincere, open, ‘plain and simple’*” giving. It is a gift given without anything but a desire to help us.

“*haplos... simply, openly, frankly, sincerely...*” (Thayer, p. 57; 574)

“*haplos... Lat. simpliciter, singly, in one way, ... Il. simply, plainly, openly, frankly,* (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT 574)

*haplos* “liberally, with singleness of heart,” is used in James 1:5 of God as the gracious and “liberal” Giver. The word may be taken either (a) in a logical sense, signifying unconditionally, simply, or (b) in a moral sense, generously; for the double meaning compare A, No. 3. On this passage Hort writes as follows: “Later writers comprehend under the one word the whole magnanimous and

honorable type of character in which singleness of mind is the central feature." (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:574)

While reproach may appear to be out of place in this promise, it is actually a very important aspect of the faith we can have if we ask. It is a great relief to know that God will not become frustrated or angry with us. Our efforts and lack of ability will not create a rebuke. When asking for something we think we should already have we might be tempted to think that God would be frustrated with us. This would severely hinder our desire to keep asking when year after year our growth seems so slow and we can rationalized in our minds that we don't deserve to ask for this anymore. Some might think God is thinking: "AGAIN???" "Haven't you got this down yet?" We should never feel any sense of this in Him.

*"oneidizo,... to reproach, upbraid, revile;... of deserved reproach,.. of unjust reproach, to revile:... to upbraid, cast (favours received) in one's teeth..."* (Thayer, p 446; 3679)

*"oneidizo,... I. to throw a reproach upon one, cast in one's teeth, object or impute to one, Lat. objicere, exprobrare, ... to impute it to him that. . to reproach, upbraid, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon, NT:3679)*

Though we might feel otherwise, if there has been a long period of time or that maybe we ought to be further along and we feel kind of shamed to be asking at this point. But we have God's promise that He will not do that. The asking alone will receive a response. He will not reproach upbraid, revile or cast back into our teeth. Even if we deserve it, He will not do it. God gives liberally and freely and has no anger or desire to speak evil of us for asking. He wants to give it. He wants us to have it.

### **and it will be given to him.**

The only condition to this promise is asking. Once that condition is fulfilled, it will be given. This last clause is given for emphasis and assurance: He has already said it once so this is not meaningless repetition, but meaningful and powerful repetition:

*If **any** of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who **gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.** James 1:5-6*

Anyone who lacks wisdom is commanded to ask! If they keep that commandment, then God will give to all liberally and without reproach. Finally if we obey that command it will be given. Simple clear and powerful. He will give it to us if we ask for it. This is the same term as used above. God bestows, gives as a gift, grants, gives to the one asking. We need to remember God's assurance when giving a promise. Though given in the context of a promise and swearing, it is still important for us to understand the power of God's promises. If he makes a promise He always keeps it.

*For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. Heb 6:13-18*

It will be given!

### **6 But let him ask in faith,**

If anyone lacks wisdom, the command God gave is that they must ask. If they ask they do ask, they have fulfilled the only condition to have it given liberally. Now God does add a second condition. Yet it is not a condition on the seeking of the wisdom which is still fulfilled only in asking, but now the condition is on the asking itself. This condition must be met or God will not give. This asking must be within the interior of our faith in Him. We must trust Him when we ask and already know that He will hear and He will answer.

The preposition “in” is used here with the dative faith to emphasize that our asking must be in the midst of and in the interior of faith. We are surrounded, equipped, furnished and assisted by this faith. So faith becomes the means of the instrument by which our asking must be founded.

“*en*...a preposition taking the dative after it;... Eng. *in, on, at, with, by among*. I LOCALLY; 1. of Place proper; a. in the interior of some whole; within the limits of some space... 5. used of that with which a person is surrounded, equipped, furnished, assisted, or acts... c. of that which one either leads or brings with him, or with which he is furnished or equipped; esp after verbs of coming, (*en* of accompaniment), where we often say *with ...* d. of the instrument or means by or with which anything is accomplished, owing to the influence of the Hebr. prep... much more common in the sacred writ. than in the prof... where we say *with, by means of, by(through)*...” (Thayer, p. 209-212; 1722)

Since faith is “*the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen,*” we must have great conviction and expectation here.

“*pistis*... *faith*; i. e. 1. *conviction* of the truth of anything, belief... in the N.T. of a *conviction or belief respecting man’s relationship to God and divine things*, generally with the included idea of *trust* and *holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it*...” (Thayer, p. 512-414; 4102)

There must be conviction, trust and holy fervor, a strong and welcome conviction or belief in this promise. We must “know” it is true. We must rely upon it, we must give God our absolute confidence in this matter. We must believe His Word and be confident that He will do what He promised. That is not difficult to the one who trusts God and will be nearly impossible for the one who does not. If we believe in what God did for Solomon, then we will not have any problem here.

Look again at the chart of the commands and the promises on the previous page. We are drawn inexorably from the need to feel joy through the steps of commands on how to look at things and what to gain as a result of them. At the end if we can’t find the means to make the right applications we must ask. If at any point in these commands and promises we find a gap, it is our faith that has failed, because there really isn’t any way to misunderstand the commands or the promises. In the eyes of God there is only one reason. A lack of faith.

### **without any doubting,**

There can be “NO” doubting. Doubting is completely inappropriate here. It has been promised by God who cannot lie, even when giving His word.

“*medeis*,... it is used either in connection with a noun, *no, none*, or absolutely, *no one, not one, no man*, neut. *nothing*,... a. with an imperative: *medeis* being the person to whom something is forbidden... [A. V. *have thou nothing to do with etc.*], “ (Thayer, p. 411; 3367).

There must be no moving back and forth in our minds. The term is used in a very good sense of making judgements and assessments. But while we can make judgements and assessments on the truths in the Scriptures to see if we are truly holding them, we can’t do it with God’s promises.

“*diakrino*... 1. *to separate, make a distinction, discriminate*... 2. *to learn by discrimination, to try, decide*... 3. ... *to be at variance with one’s self, hesitate, doubt*...” (Thayer p 138-139)

We cannot seek to figure this thing out and be at variance in ourselves when it comes to a promise from God. We must accept that God can do it, and since He has promised, it is done and there is nothing left to distinguish or discriminate about. We must not go through mental efforts to figure it out and find ourselves wondering how and if it can be done. We trust in God’s omnipotent power and eternal being and changelessness and leave it at that.

### **for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.**

The one who doubts is like the foam or stick that is thrown into the waves and shows exactly what waves do.

“*kludon*... (*kluzo* to wash against); from Homer *down; a dashing or surging wave, a surge, a*

*violent agitation of the sea:* Luke 8:24; James 1:6 (Jonah 1:4,12; Wisdom 14:5). (Thayer NT: 2830)

*kludon* "a billow," is translated "wave" in James 1:6, KJV (RV, "surge"); in Luke 8:24 it is translated "raging (of the water)." (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:2830)

So it can be simple waves of a tempest. With doubting, it can move from one to the other depending on the circumstances. Waves simply move water back and forth and up and down. They can change direction and size with no warning. They never go anywhere and neither do the things tossed upon them. On the coasts it is especially prominent as the water moves in, and is sucked back out, it moves in again and is sucked back out. That is its course and that is all it does minute by minute hour by hour day by day and year by year. Those who have any doubts about God and the promises of God are just like that. Their doubts and their trust surge against one another and nothing is ever accomplished.

### **7 For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,**

Here is another command directed from God. If you are doubting His promises, don't expect to receive anything. Anyone who reads these verses and whose feelings toward prayers for wisdom, or anything else for that matter, will never receive anything from God and you might as well know it right now so you can change it. It all comes down to faith. Don't imagine or think in anyway within yourself.

"*oiomai... to think, suppose...*" (Thayer, p. 442; 3633)

"*oiomai... nomizo, dokeo, hupolambano*, to regard something as presumably true, but without particular certainty - 'to suppose, to presume, to assume, to imagine, to believe, to think.' ... 'for that man must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord' James 1:7; 'I imagine that the whole world could not hold the books that would be written' John 21:25. (Lou and Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:3633).

That you will ever "receive" anything:

"*lambano,... to take*, i.e. 1. *To take with the hand, lay hold of...* any pers. or thing in order to use it: absol., 3. *to take what is one's own, to take to one's self, to make one's own... II to receive*(what is given) *to gain, get, obtain...*" (Thayer, p. 370-371; 2983).

You will not receive, get, gain or obtain anything from God.

### **8 being a double-minded man,**

Such in the eyes of God is a "double-minded" man:

"*dipsuchos... double minded; a. wavering, uncertain, doubting...*" (Thayer, p. 153; 1374)

*dipsuchos* lit. means "*twosouled*" (*dis*, "twice," *psuche*, "a soul"), hence, "double-minded," James 1:8; 4:8. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:1374)

This is a terrible indictment on the soul. Such a one is worthless to all. They are the lukewarm.  
**unstable in all his ways.**

This makes you "unstable:"

"*akatastatos... unstable, inconstant, restless...*" (Thayer, p. 22; 182)

You cannot be relied upon by God and hence will not be blessed by Him unless you change. This is true not only of faith in prayer though, it is true in all your ways:

"*hodos... a way; 1. properly a. a travelled way, road:... 2. Metaphorically a. according to the familiar figure of speech, especially frequent in Hebrew... and not unknown to the Greeks by which an action is spoken of as proceeding, ...HODOS denotes a course of conduct, a way(i.e. manner) of*

thinking, feeling, deciding..." (Thayer, p. 437-438)

## 9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation,

### 9 But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position;

Two of the greatest trials in life are poverty and wealth. Each must be looked upon properly or they can tear a spiritually minded person to pieces. Note Prov 30:8-9:

*Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): 8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches — Feed me with the food allotted to me; 9 Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God. Pr. 30:7-9*

These two dreadful dangers can both be carefully avoided on the narrow path that leads to life if the wisdom offered in these two passages is taken to heart by the people of God. The Holy Spirit reveals the proper attitude for men and women in either situation. He offers this wisdom to us in the next section of the book of James:

The term “humble” is defined:

*“tapeinos... low, ... a. prop. not rising far from the ground... b. metaph a. as to condition, lowly, of low degree... i. q. brought low with grief, depressed... B. lowly in spirit, humble... (Thayer p 614; 5011) of Place, lying low, Hdt.;*

*“tapeinos... to live in low regions, Pind.; of stature or size, low, ... 2. of the condition of persons, brought down, humbled, submissive, ... of low rank, lowly, mean, ... small, poor, weak, ... to be poorly off, ...” (from Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:5011)*

What type of humble circumstances does he speak of. The context favors poverty since he contrasts it with wealth in the next verse, but it could also be slavery, or other circumstances that make them feel low. Poverty is a humbling circumstance in the eyes of many. It brings mistreatment and reviling by others. It is truly a humbling experience to be poor. The book of Proverbs expresses some of the bitterness the poor might face:

*The rich man's wealth is his strong city; The destruction of the poor is their poverty. Pr. 10:15*

*The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor, But the rich has many friends. Pr. 14:20*

*Wealth makes many friends, But the poor is separated from his friend. Pr. 19:4*

*All the brothers of the poor hate him; How much more do his friends go far from him! He may pursue them with words, yet they abandon him. Pr. 19:7*

God wants those who find themselves in such humbling circumstances not to focus upon them. Far from feeling sorrow or pity for their lowly state that might lead them to depression, frustration, or envy and bitterness and “profaning” the Name, they are to change their focus to “glory” in something quite different. The term “glory” is defined:

*“kauchaomai... in the N. T. often used by Paul [some 35 times; by James twice]; to glory (whether with reason or without):... to glory (on account) of a thing... ” (Thayer p. 342; 2744)*

*“kauchaomai : to express an unusually high degree of confidence in someone or something being exceptionally noteworthy - 'to boast.' ... 'whoever boasts must boast of the Lord' 1 Cor 1:31. 'your boasting is not right' 1 Cor 5:6. 'all such boasting is wrong' James 4:16. ... 'that is why we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God' 2 Thess 1:4. 'this is how it is with the tongue: small as it is, it can boast about great things' James 3:5. **Whether in any particular context the boasting is legitimate or not depends upon what is boasted about.** In a number of languages, however, quite different terms are employed, depending upon the differing degrees of justification for such boasting. (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon NT 2744)*

This is the glory of self-esteem and the feelings of worth and value that give people self-respect and self-worth in their own eyes. The brother who has no outward reasons for these feelings is counseled to find them within. They are to glory in their “high position.” This term is defined:

*“hupsoo... to lift up on high, to exalt... metaph. to raise to the very summit of opulence and prosperity... simply TINA, to exalt, to raise to dignity, honor and happiness... ” (Thayer, p. 647; 5312)*

*“hupsoo... the dimension of height compared to the other dimensions ... bathos which measures the same dimension downward. ... can also be a high place, mountains, highlands, heights, ... the "height" of dignity, Ps.-Aristot. Mund., 6, p. 398 a. 12. Later it is used as the title "highness," in the hupsos or "sublimity" of the wise and noble man, (Kittel TDWNT 5311)*

Every one who comes to the Lord with no physical possessions and no hope for betterment find in their Lord dignity, honor and happiness. They have been raised to look at the things that are unseen and to ignore the things that are seen. The glory of the resurrection more than makes up for any physical deprivation. Those who have nothing are counseled to hope and look fully upon the glory that shall afterward be revealed.

The basic idea here is the same as what Paul told the slave. The man called as a slave has far fewer opportunities and thus could feel demeaned, but

*Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. 21 Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. 22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. 1Cor. 7:20-23*

**10 but the rich in his humiliation,  
10 and let the rich man glory in his humiliation,**

With the term “*but*” James continues the concept of the previous verse, but since the individuals are different the results will also be different. The poor are in a low circumstance, so they are lifted up by the gospel, “*but*” the rich must be brought down.

“*de ... but: conjunctive Particle, with adversative force: it commonly answers to “mein” and may often be rendered by while, whereas, on the other hand, v. -but mein is often omitted, de being used merely to pass on from one thing to another.*” (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:1161)

Wealth generally leads to pride and arrogance (a high estate — the opposite of the man in the previous verse) because money brings power and prestige to those who possess it. Jesus felt strongly about this matter and spoke of it often.

*Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Mk. 10:23-25*

The wise Christian who is wealthy must learn to is to glory (being brought forward from the previous verse) — gets his self esteem from the fact that he has risen above these grave and terrible temptations of empty earthly pride and is now a humble yet wise Christian. The term “rich” is defined:

“*plousios... rich; a. prop. wealthy, abounding in material resources... b. metaph. and univ. abounding, abundantly supplied... of the thing in which one abounds... “ (Thayer, p. 519; 4145)*

Note that this is a word of wealth that gives abounding material resources. Those who are abundantly supplied. This term fairly well captures the middle class in America. We are not accustomed to being considered wealthy but by the standards of most nations and certainly by the standards of that day we are wealthy.

The dangers of such wealth are subtler when unnoticed, but since most of us do have an abundance of this world’s goods and the free time to enjoy them, it would be wise for us to consider the obligation here set forth. All such “wealthy” brethren must learn to boast in their “humiliation”:

“*tapeinoo... to make low, bring low... a. to level, reduce to a plain... b. metaph. to bring into a humble condition, reduce to meaner circumstances; i.e. a. to assign a lower rank or place to; to abase... c. to lower, depress, [Eng. humble]:... one;’s soul, bring down one’s pride... to have a modest opinion of one’s self, to behave in an unassuming manner devoid of all haughtiness...” (Thayer p 614; 5013)*

God’s people, especially those who were “*brought lower*” when they became a Christian need to glory in that fact. This is one of the things the gospel brought to light. It showed the folly of the general attitude man has about wealth. Wealth is not a valuable commodity for two basic reasons. First, it can only be used here and cannot be taken from this life. It therefore has no lasting value. The second reason is that it causes people to focus too much on this life to the neglect of the life to come.

*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Tim 6:9-10*

Those who are Christians look at this life as a place of preparation for the next where sacrifices are necessary and welcome. The wealthy look at this life as all there is and will be. Sacrifices to such people are foolish, and the possibility of a life to come and a future judgement quenches their joy. Such are the greedy idolaters Paul warns of:

*Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. Col 3:5-7*

Those who have escaped such a dangerous and spiritually lethal attitude should be grateful to God for that fact. They should boast in their humiliation. Wealthy people should be grateful that their wealth did not lead them to reject the gospel. They should also see their wealth as a further responsibility that the poor man doesn't have.

*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 1Tim. 6:17-19*

**because as a flower of the field he will pass away.**

**because like flowering grass he will pass away.**

Wealth is not permanent. Those who have wealth are not permanent. There is no permanence to money or to those who have it. This is the "reason" for what he said above.

*"hoti... I. the substance or contents (of a statement), that; 1. joined to verbs of saying and declaring... II the reason why anything is said to be or to be done, because, since, for that, for, (a causal conjunct. ...)... a. it is added to a speaker's words to show what ground he gives for his opinion;... b. hoti makes reference to some word or words that precede or immediately follow it..."*  
(Thayer p 458-460; 3754)

Like the beautiful flowers in the field, their beauty and stateliness is so temporary that no one envies their beauty or desires to be like them. A flower stays beautiful for only a few days then it begins to wither.

*The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." Isa 40:6-8*

So also are those who have wealth. They last such a short time in relation to eternity that it doesn't really even matter that they have it. Life passes so quickly and is gone. The wealthy Christians are to put their main emphasis on the fact that Jesus has humbled them.

All the wealthy will pass away, and in their passing all such distinctions will end.

*parerchomai ... from para, "by," erchomai, "to come" or "go," denotes (I), literally, "to pass, pass by," (a) of persons, Matt 8:28; Mark 6:48; Luke 18:37; Acts 16:8; (b) of things, Matt 26:39,42; of time, Matt 14:15; Mark 14:35; Acts 27:9, KJV, "past" (RV, "gone by"); 1 Peter 4:3; (II), metaphorically, (a) "to pass away, to perish," Matt 5:18; 24:34,35; Mark 13:30,31; Luke 16:17; 21:32,33; 2 Cor 5:17; James 1:10; 2 Peter 3:10; (b) "to pass by, disregard, neglect, pass over," Luke 11:42; 15:29, (from Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:3928)*

Jesus speaks of the terrible nature of this passing in his discussion of the rich man and Lazarus.

*So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. Lk. 16:22-25*

**11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed;**

As noted in Isaiah, all the glory of men will be destroyed just like the grass with its flowers. Although our life is longer and not as easily detectable, it follows exactly the same pattern as the grass. Because of the brevity of life and the uncertainty of riches, the wealthy child of God should forget he even has wealth except to use it for his own enjoyment and the help he can

give to others. Wealth is not a badge, it does not confer honor, it should not be flaunted or used in ways to gain self-esteem. Our glory comes from knowing the Lord. Everything else must be put down. It is futile useless, and counter productive to see glory in such things.

*Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; 24 But let him who glorifies glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord. Jer 9:23-24*

Thus the poor man sees in the gospel a stepping stone into glory and honor, the wealthy man sees in the gospel the service he owes Christ and the wonderful truth that abasement and humiliation leads to greater honor. Both are blessed by the gospel but in very different ways. The wealthy need to follow the steps of Jesus.

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. 2 Cor 8:9*

This poverty was the losing of all the greatness He possess before He came to earth. This is exactly what the wealthy need to do with their wealth. They should rejoice to follow Jesus.

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9*

*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, Phil 2:5-10*

### **so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.**

It is evident here and in 2:8 that there is a problem and that it seems to center more among the wealthy than among the poor. It is about the wealthy and to the wealthy that he writes the most. The rich man is not going to abide forever, in the midst of his "pursuits" something terrible is going to occur:

*"poreia... a journey... a going i.e. purpose, pursuit, undertaking... Jas 1:11" (Thayer, p. 531; 4197)*

Looking at life as a journey, in the midst of his life he is going to fade away like the flower in the illustration above. In the middle of his undertakings and purposes, He will simply fade away:

*"maraino... to extinguish(a flame, fire, light, etc.); to render arid, make to waste away, cause to wither, pass. to wither, wilt, dry up... Trop. to waste away, consume away, perish... i.q. to have a miserable end: Jas. 1:11, where the writer uses a fig. suggested by what he had just said..."*

*(Thayer, p. 389; 3133)*

It doesn't matter how much wealth they have and how much power and esteem it has given to them, they will all come to a miserable end without the Lord. No matter what he pursues and seeks to master, and no matter how successful he might become in those areas, he will wither and come to nothing in the end. Consider the parable of the Lord about it:

*Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."*

*14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Lk. 12:13-21*

Before leaving the topic, it is wise to remember what Jesus said about the greatness of those who serve.

*But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. 35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "**If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.**" Mk. 9:34-35*

*But **he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.** 12 And **whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.** Mt. 23:11-12*

*And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who*

exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' 26 But not so among you; on the contrary, **he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.** 27 For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. Lk. 22:25-27

**12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation;**

**12 Blessed is a man who perseveres (remains steadfast ESV) under trial; (NAS)**

Because of the placement of this verse, there has been a small difference of opinion on how it should be translated. As was noted in verse two, the word "*pierasmos*" can be translated with either trial or temptation. But since God never tempts us with evil, the translators have consistently translated temptations to sin with the term tempt or temptation and the testing of our character with trial.

Since James spoke of trials in 1:2-4, he could be finishing up those thoughts before moving on.

*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:2-5*

*Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. James 1:12-13 NASU*

Yet, since in the next section, James will use this same term obviously speaking of temptation, it is also possible that he begins here with the idea of temptation (KJV ASV NKJV).

*Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. James 1:12-13*

*Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. James 1:13-15*

My own opinion would go the direction of trial. The use of the term "*endure*" or "*persevere*" better fits the context of the "*trials*" of the first few verses than they do the lusts of temptations. Although it could be argued that Joseph persevered under the temptations of Potiphar's wife, the reality is more complex. Generally we flee temptation, we don't endure it.

James pronounces the same type of blessing and uses the same terminology as that of Jesus in the opening words of His Sermon on the Mount.

*"makarios... blessed, happy: joined to names of God...In congratulations, the reason why one is to be pronounced blessed..." (Thayer, p. 386; 3107)*

In content beatitudes, which are common in both poetry and prose throughout the centuries, reflect the sorrows and afflictions, the aspirations and ideals, of the Greeks. Practical Greek philosophy breathes in them. Orientated to earth, the Gk. mind first draws its happiness from earthly goods and values. Thus parents are extolled for fine children, mothers for admirable sons (cf. Luke 11:27), the bridegroom for winning an excellent bride. ... Praise is naturally accorded to those who have found the great happiness of love. It is accorded also to the wealthy whose possessions give them a good position in life, but even more so to those who also have a good understanding or who are free from tribulations. If regard is had for inner values, he is extolled who has attained to fame, honor and manly virtue. Kittel; TDWNT 3107

This is the term used by the Greek's in that day to give honor and praise for the success, happiness and contentment they bring. Beauty, wealth, power, athletic ability, mental achievement, or even good fortune were praised with this term. Today we honor such people with: Olympic gold/silver medal; School valedictorian, Military honors, a Nobel peace prize, a County Fair's blue ribbon. All convey honor. It is a wonderful experience to be so honored. Jesus and James have revealed the things that will bring the equivalent with God.

The Holy Spirit reserves this blessedness for the most important of things God is looking for in His servants. The things that make us the most useful and valuable to Him. Therefore whatever is the recipient of this blessedness should cause us to take a good hard look at what it is referring to and then seek diligently to master it. In this case the attitude and lifestyle is the ability to "enduring" trials. Another point that leads to the idea that this is a trial we must bear up

under centers on the use of the term endurance.

*“hupomone... 1. steadfastness, constancy, endurance... in the N. T. the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings... 2. a patient, steadfast waiting for... 3. a patient enduring, sustaining...”* (Thayer, p. 644; 5281)

Of the seventeen times it is used in the NT it is always used of trials and never of temptation. So I believe James is completing the thoughts of 1:2-4 and including the trials of wealth and poverty. Those who are patient, enduring and seeking the silver lining in their trials are blessed. They have a deep happiness and contentment that nothing in this life can take from them. The trial and proving of a man's faith which leads to the winning of the battle and the feelings of joy and peace at winning. Note though that the blessedness is in the enduring of the temptation. Those who endure the temptation are the only ones under consideration.

**for when he has been approved,**

“For” is used to give the reason why we endure, and why it brings such blessedness.

*“hoti... I. the substance or contents (of a statement), that; 1. joined to verbs of saying and declaring... II the reason why anything is said to be or to be done, because, since, for that, for, (a causal conjunct. ...)... a. it is added to a speaker's words to show what ground he gives for his opinion;... b. hoti makes reference to some word or words that precede or immediately follow it...”* (Thayer p 458-460; 3754)

The reason is simple. They are “*approved!*”

*“dokimos... 1. prop. accepted, particularly of coins and metals... hence univ. proved, tried in the N.T. one who is of tried faith and integrity [R. V. approved]... 2. accepted i. q. acceptable, pleasing...”* (Thayer, p. 155; 1384)

The Christian has fought a great battle and won. As Job before them, they continued steadfast under all the trials and never thought of renouncing or blaming God. Thus when we are placed into a severe trial and we come out of it successfully, it is a great victory and something to savor and feel good about. The repetition appears to be due to its importance and frequency. He will return to it again in James 5:1-11. The joy of such a battle won is great indeed. It makes it worth the fight and the anguish just to win. Peter described this as proving the genuineness of their faith which is actually more precious than gold.

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1Pet. 1:3-8*

**he will receive the crown of life**

This is new! James has not spoken of the crown before. These trials become the means by which we can “gain” this crown.

*“lambano,... to take, i.e. 1. To take with the hand, lay hold of... any pers. or thing in order to use it: absol., 3. to take what is one's own, to take to one's self, to make one's own... II to receive (what is given) to gain, get, obtain...”* (Thayer, p. 370-371; 2983).

What a wonderful blessing indeed. The trials have become our area of labor of toil in which we can gain this wonderful crown that has been promised. The term crown meant the same thing in the original language as it does today.

*“stephanos... a crown... a. prop. as a mark of royalty or (in general) exalted rank... b. metaph. a. the eternal blessedness which will be given as a prize to the genuine servants of God and Christ...”* (Thayer, p. 587; 4735)

This crown has been described elsewhere in similar terms.

*And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for **an imperishable crown.** 1Cor. 9:25-26*

*Finally, there is laid up for me **the crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2Tim. 4:8*

*and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive **the crown of glory** that does not fade away. 1Pet. 5:4*

*Be faithful until death, and I will give you **the crown of life.** Rev. 2:10*

*Hold fast what you have, that no one may take **your crown.** Rev. 3:11-12*

**which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

The Lord has “promised” this crown to those who love Him:

“*epaggelia*... 1. *announcement*... 2. *promise*; a. *the act of promising, a promise given or to be given*... It is used also of the divine promise of blessings, esp. of the benefits of salvation by Christ... b. by meton. *a promised good or blessing*...” (Thayer, p. 226-227; 1860)

God made a promise. A promise that will never be broken and a portion of which has already been confirmed with an oath. God cannot lie and He has sworn by His own name that all who love him will be given this wonderful crown. The term “love” is the great “new” ideal that Jesus introduced to mankind:

“*agapao*.. with acc. of the person, *to have a preference for, wish well to, regard the welfare of*... of the love of Christians towards one another; of the benevolence which God, in providing salvation for men, has exhibited by sending his Son to them and giving him up to death, Jn 3:16; Rom 8:37... of the love which led Christ, in procuring human salvation, to undergo sufferings and death, Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2; of the love with which God regards Christ, ... with an acc. of the thing, AGAPAO denotes *to take pleasure in the thing, prize it above other things, be unwilling to abandon it or do without it... to welcome with desire, long for*...” (Thayer, p. 3-4; 25)

A true love for God means an unselfish care for Him, a preference for Him and a regard for His welfare. To take pleasure in our relationship with Him, to prize Him and His ways above all other things. We long for Him and strongly desire to make Him happy with us by making the kind of sacrifices spoken of above. All those who truly love God welcome opportunities to prove that love to Him by making sacrifices and showing ourselves approved through them.

Hence those who uphold their honor and integrity as well as their faithfulness to God in the midst of various trials including the trial of wealth or poverty are blessed and will receive the crown of life. Because they have proven their love for Him.

### **13 Let no one say when he is tempted,**

While there are some things in life that tend to make everything we believe look grey, fuzzy or out of focus, God gave us things that are always absolute, fixed and never changing, always black or white. When we take these absolutes and fix them clearly in our minds, they will keep us focused and on the proper path, or help us keep or regain our bearings if we lose sight of things.

In this next section of Scripture, James will set out two spiritual absolutes.

**Absolute 1:** God has no part in temptation and sin. They do not come from Him, He did not seek to place them in our path, He has nothing to do with them. When we find ourselves tempted to sin, the source can never be God.

**Absolute 2:** Every good thing we have ever experienced was created and designed by God. He is the author and source. It is God’s nature to give good things and all that He gives is good. Although since the time of Adam and Eve, Temptation has become an everyday occurrence, there is one thing that must never be said and by implication never thought as well.

“*medeis*,... it is used either in connection with a noun, *no, none*, or absolutely, *no one, not one, no man*, neut. *nothing*,... a. with an imperative: *medeis* being the person to whom something is forbidden... Jas. 1:13; [A. V. *have thou nothing to do with* etc.],” (Thayer, p. 411; 3367).

Thus it is a universal command. No one under any circumstances is ever to speak such words. There are two words for speech in the Scriptures. One is just words coming thoughtlessly from the mouth and the other are words that have been carefully considered. It is the latter term that is used here.

*lego / laleo* There are two leading aspects under which speech may be regarded. It may, first, be contemplated as the articulate utterance of human language, in contrast with the absence of this, from whatever cause springing; whether from choice, as in those who hold their peace, when they might speak; or from the present undeveloped condition of the organs and faculties, as in the case of infants ... This is one aspect of speech, namely articulated words, as contrasted with silence, with mere sounds or animal cries. But, secondly, speech (‘*oratio*’ or ‘*oris ratio*’) may be regarded as the orderly linking and knitting together in connected discourse of the inward thoughts and feelings of the mind, ... But if in *lalein* the fact of uttering articulated speech is the prominent notion, in *legein* it is the words uttered, and that these correspond to reasonable thoughts within the breast of the utterer. (Trench’s Synonyms of the NT 2980)

We must never allow our reasoning to bring such words. They must be crushed and removed as

the terrible lies that would be. and responses to The command here centers around our outlook and words while in the midst of temptation. When trials come that we cannot bear, or temptations and enticements come to give in to lust, we must always see things clearly enough that we would never come close to saying the words of the next clause. “tempted” is defined: When we find ourselves being tempted and enticed to commit sin we must keep a firm grip on our mind. Others have been led to doubt God, but His people should never doubt Him. These words must never enter our minds or come forth from our lips.

### **“I am tempted by God”**

The only new thing here is the preposition “by,” and it is the focal point.

“*apo*,... preposition with the Genitive, *from*, signifying ... Origin ... *apo* is used ... **II Of Origin**; whether of local origin, the place whence; or of causal origin, the cause from which... **2. of causal origin, or the Cause; and a. of the material cause, so called, or of that which supplies the material for the maintenance of the action expressed by the verb:...** **b. of the cause** on account of which anything is or is done, where commonly it can be rendered *for*... **c. of the moving or impelling cause...** **d. of the efficient cause**, viz. of things from the force of which anything proceeds and of persons, from whose will, power, authority, command, favor, order, influence, direction, anything is to be sought;” (Thayer, p. 57-59; 575)

The term centers on origin, and cause. Did that temptation originate with God, was God the cause of that temptation. Did God have anything to do with it to the point where one might be able to say that he brought this about. No. We are never to say that God was the source of cause of any temptation. Do not say that God is the cause or God is the one who originated this temptation. Never say it, whether in your mind or in conversations to others.

### **for God cannot be tempted by evil,**

The preposition “for” is only used when a conclusion or reason for a previous statement is made:

“*gar*... is properly a particle of affirmation and conclusion, denoting *truly therefore, verily as the case stands*, ... the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added, whence arises the causal or argumentative force of the particle, *for*... II It adduces the Cause or gives the reason of a preceding statement or opinion... III It serves to explain, make clear, illustrate, a preceding thought or word: *for, i. q. that is, namely*...” (Thayer, p. 109-110; 1063)

Thus the reason why we could never say God is responsible is because God cannot be tempted.

“*apeirastos*... as well *untempted as untemptable*... that cannot be tempted by evil, not liable to temptation to sin, Jas 1.13...” (Thayer, p. 55; 551)

It is something foreign to His being and nature. Because He Himself is untemptable, it would never enter His consciousness to want it for another. Think of the implications here. When God created us we were in His image and after His likeness. He wanted us to be just like Him. It is therefore not possible that He could be involved in something like this. Added to this is the *agape-love* that is the core of God’s being. Since evil leads to eternal punishment, it too would be against His nature.

When we act according to His nature, it is always good and wholesome. The very nature of evil is something foreign and wrong. It makes Him sick for anyone to do evil. He cannot do it Himself, never feels the desire to want to sin or seek to make anyone else feel that way. It is simply impossible for Him to do. The term James chose for “evil” is the exact opposite and antithesis of what is good. Since all that God made is very good, it would not be a part of his nature or will to create the opposite of that.

“*kakos*... *bad* 1. *univ. of a bad nature; not such as it ought to be*. 2. [morally, i.e.] of a mode of thinking, feeling, acting; *base, wrong, wicked*:... neut. *kakon*, to *evil* i.e. what is contrary to law, either divine or human, *wrong, crime*... spec. of *wrongs inflicted*... 3. *troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful*...” (thayer, p. 320; 2556)

Evil is always something that creates a wrong. Taking something from another and often creating a lifetime of sorrow and anguish. So murder, adultery would always be evil as it steals something so precious from another. God cannot be involved in such things in any way.

### **and He Himself does not tempt anyone.**

That which does not interest Him, He has no desire to see anyone else do. When we are

tempted, it was not in God's plan or mind that we should have done so. He wants "no one" to be tempted to do evil.

*"oudeis... and not one, no one, none, no; it differs from meideis as ou does from me... 1. with nouns... 2. absolutely, ... nothing whatever, not at all, in no wise..."* (Thayer, p. 462; 3762)  
*me* a particle of negation, which differs from *ou* (which is always an adverb) in that ***ou* denies the thing itself (or to speak technically, denies simply, absolutely, categorically, directly, objectively), but *me* denies the thought of the thing, or the thing according to the judgment, opinion, will, purpose, preference, of someone (hence, as we say technically, indirectly, hypothetically, subjectively).** This distinction holds also of the compounds *oudeis medeis ...*"  
(Thayer's, NT: 3361)

By using *oudeis* instead of *medeis*, James is denying the thing itself! There is absolutely, categorically, directly, and objectively no chance that this could ever occur. It is absent from His being and not something that could ever exist.

Once this point has been established and forcefully made clear in our minds then we are ready to move on to the next step. There has never been a temptation to sin in the mind of any man that God put there or wanted put there. He does not do it, never has and never will. Since God does not do this, where then do they come from?

It is interesting the direction that James takes here. Some might have thought he would move to Satan. It is clear that in the first temptation, Satan placed it in the mind of Eve through the mouth of the serpent.

*Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Gen. 3:1-7*

James skips over that. Even though Satan introduced it, it did not originate with Him. He made the suggestion, but within Eve there should have been no answering desire. It never should have been an enticement and the fact that it was completely within her and not from outside of her. This is James' point. No temptation exists outside of our own mind.

**14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed.  
each one is tempted of his own lust, drawn away and enticed.**

We can't even look at temptation as a class. It is an individual thing. Something exclusive to "each one."

*"hekastos... each, every; a. joined to a substantive... every... preceded by heis... every one: ..."* (Thayer, p. 192;1538)

*"hekastos... each one of a totality in a distributive sense - 'each.'* (Lou & Nida, NT: 1538)

Every temptation is looked at from an individual's perspective. Each one's temptations arise from their own unique combination of lust and enticement. While our translations put the verb first, the Spirit reveals it like this: *"each one is tempted of his own lust, drawn away and enticed."* "Of" his own lust is a preposition that with the Genitive (as it is here) speaks of the efficient cause or power that creates or conceives.

*"hupo... prep. under... I with the GENITIVE ... 1. prop. in a local sense, of situation or position under something higher... hence 2. metaph. of the efficient cause, as that under the power of which an event is conceived of as being... the Eng. by ..."*(Thayer, p. 642; 5259)

So each one, under the influence of his own lusts, creates the temptation with their lusts. The definition gives us a starting place, but this is such an important part of temptation that we need to look deeper than the definition.

*"epithumia...desire, craving, longing... the desire directed towards... spec. desire for what is forbidden, lust..."* (Thayer, p. 238-239; 1939)

The cravings, longings and desires that flow through the human heart are the source and cause of every temptation known to man. These desires are also described as youthful lusts because

most of them are formed while we are still young through our own evil companions and imaginations. Everyone can read the list of the lust of the flesh and find those that have been activated and those that find no power within them. These are the beginnings of covetousness and temptation. This explains why different people are tempted by different things. It doesn't matter what the outside forces are. Some will never be tempted no matter what the force in one area and fall easily in another. It has to do with the desire. When once there is desire in the heart, then and only then can temptation and desire lead to enticement:

The temptation forms the very instant that each one is "drawn away" by his or her own desires.

*"exelcho... to draw out, ... metaph. i. q. to lure forth, [A. V. draw away]... Jas. 1.14 where the metaphor is taken from hunting and fishing: as game is lured from its covert, so man by lust is allured from the safety of self-restraint to sin..."* (Thayer, p. 222; 1828)

There is an insidious turn in the terms. Things have gone from trials that lead to greater strength, blessedness and joy, to temptations that draw one from the safety of submission to God to rebellion and evil that leads to spiritual death. That such things do exist, our own hearts reveal. We know it is the truth because it has happened over and over again.

While the lexicons tell us this is a hunting and fishing term, it was also used of drawing Joseph out of the pit he had been cast in. It is a term of action. Without the "ex" it simply means to draw out as Peter did his sword and his net (Jn. 21:6,11), and the rich draw into court. (Jas. 2:6). With the addition of the "ex" it is intensified. Lust draws out and lures forth. As a fish with a worm or a deer in a snare. Just as the lure lure or other bait often is irresistible to the fish or animal, so also the heart of man is often drawn after things that are vile and worthless "by" a desire.

#### **and enticed.**

These two seem to happen simultaneously as they are synonyms. This term is very similar to being drawn out, except it takes it one step further. While the drawing out leaves in doubt what will happen next, this word clearly reveals that in the enticement is also the catching. The desire for the temptation leads to being drawn out and the being drawn out with these desires in our minds leads us to agonize over the bait and desperately want to take it. "Entice" is defined:

*"deleaso... 1. prop to bait, catch by a bait... 2 as often in prof. auth., metaph. to beguile by blandishments, allure, entice, deceive..."* (Thayer, p. 128; 1185)

The mind spins, the heart yearns, the breath quickens, the desire begins to burn brightly, and the time and opportunity to make the decision to abstain grows less and less tangible. The temptation has almost led to sin.

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#### **15 Then when lust has conceived,**

Using an adverb of time, the Holy Spirit reveals the exact sequence of events.

*eita... adv of time, then; next; after... in classic Grk., it stands in enumerations, to mark a sequence depending either on temporal succession... or on the nature of the things enumerated..."* (Thayer, p. 188; 1534)

First, there is lust and enticement. One may come first or the other depending on circumstances. Sometimes the enticement creates the lust and sometimes the lust seeks out the enticement, but either way from these temptation arises. So all temptation does not arise from God but from lust and enticement. Once the temptation is formed, the next in the sequence is conception.

*"sullambano... 1. Active, a. to seize, take... one as a prisoner,... b. to conceive, of a woman... absol... 2. Mid. a. to seize for one's self; in a hostile sense, to make (one a permanent) prisoner b. with the dat. of a pers. to take hold together with one, to assist, help... to succor..."* (Thayer, p. 595; 4815)

This is a broad term with various meanings. This is both a seizing and a conceiving. Which one is more dominant here? Both are powerful concepts. The desire seizes and brings forth sin. The desire conceives and brings forth sin. They are both true and picturesque ways of describing what happens, but the next term, "give birth," takes us back to conceive. Temptation, consisting of enticement and lust (desire) mingle together for a time, but left long enough something new is conceived. Thus all sin arises from "conceived" lust. Once that occurs, the next sequence is always the same.

#### **it gives birth to sin;**

“Gives birth” is defined:

*“tikto... to bring forth, bear, produce (fruit from the seed); prop of women giving birth... metaph. to bear, bring forth hamartian, in the simile where he epithumia is likened to a female, Jas. 1.15...”* (Thayer, p. 623; 5088)

*“tikto... to bring into the world; of the father, to beget, of the mother, to bring forth, Hom., II. of female animals, to bear young, breed, Hom.; ... to lay eggs, III. of vegetable produce, to bear, produce, ... IV. metaph. to generate, produce, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT: 5088)*

Something new and never before existing is now in the world. Another act of rebellion has been wrung from the heart of a faithful child of God. But it came from within and not from God. This rebellious act is called “sin” which is defined:

*“hamartia... a failing to hit the mark... a bad action, evil deed ... In the N. T. always in an ethical sense, and 1. equiv. to ... a sinning, whether it occurs by omission or commission, in thought and feeling or in speech and action... 2. that which is done wrong committed or resultant sin, an offense, a violation of the divine law in thought or in act... 3. collectively, the complex or aggregate of sins committed either by a single person or by many...”* (Thayer, p. 31; 266)

It is a terrible but reliable way to describe all rebellion against God. He is not tempted with such things. He will not tempt others to such things because when it is all finished the man or woman has missed the mark, done what is wrong and offended the divine law in thought or in act. But it does not stop here either. It can be put to death with repentance right at this moment and banished from the heart. If it destroyed at this point, then the person is finished with the drawing away, desire, enticement, and sin. It is all destroyed and the person is back where they were. But if they do not stop it here, then it keeps growing and changing.

**and when sin is accomplished, (NASB) (finished - KJV) (full grown NKJV) (fully grown - ESV) (fully matured - AMP)**

I have always struggled with the translations that translate this term with the idea of sin growing from infancy to maturity. The problem is that there is no time, even in its infancy, that sin does not bring death. The idea that sin can be an infant without bringing death, and that death only comes after it has grown up is foreign to the Scriptures. Jesus revealed this truth in His sermon on the Mount. He really doesn't give us any room for progression. The lust even in the heart has already brought forth sin and death.

*“You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment;” Mt. 5:21-22 (ESV)*

*“You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Mt. 5:27-28*

The Greek term is not used in the Scriptures of growing to maturity, but of bringing something quite to an end or completing, and thus perfecting it.

*apo-teleo ... to bring quite to an end, complete a work, ... perfect, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT: 658)*

So what is that moment between conception and fully accomplished that brings forth death? It is doubtful that we could establish it ourselves. Repentance and confession are the only things that can be placed between sin's conception and sin's full accomplishment. If sin is not allowed to become fully accomplished it can't be repented of or confessed.

The real purpose here seems to be to strike fear into our hearts. From the very moment that temptation arises as a result of lust and enticement, there is a grave danger that it could conceive. If it conceives, the birth will be sin and death.

The moment we feel the desire and become aware of the enticement, temptation is already present. There is such a fine line with what happens next. Jesus was able to deal with every temptation and never allow sin to be conceived.

*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Heb. 4:15-16*

Thus when we fell a temptation we are already in grave peril. We need to be seeking the way of escape so that we can bear that temptation without the conception of sin.

*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 1Cor. 10:13*

It is brought to quite an end, comes to maturity and is perfected. This strikes terror even to describe, let alone experience. The Christian is here counseled to get away from sin as quickly as possible. The longer it is left in the heart the stronger and more mature it becomes. Those who wish to look into it's jaws see only one thing:

**it brings forth death.**

Sin, conceived and accomplished "*brings forth*," "*bears*" and "*produces*," something that never existed before.

*"apokeuo... to bring forth from the womb, give birth to... Jas. 1:15 to produce..."* (Thayer, p. 64; 616)

If we look at the first time there was temptation, sin and death, this becomes easier to see and understand.

God revealed to Adam that there was one tree in the midst of the garden that could bring death to him in the very day that he ate it. This was the death that is described here.

*And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Gen. 2:16-17*

Eve also understood exactly what God had told Adam before her creation.

*but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Gen. 3:3*

Yet Satan was still able to create the enticement that led to the lust.

*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. Gen. 3:6*

Before this conversation, there was no lust, no enticement, thus no temptation and no death. But after the conversation, she saw the tree in a different way and now temptation and enticement were formed. Soon temptation led to the conception of sin and when it was all finished both Adam and Eve were dead.

Paul revealed that this exact same process occurs for each of us at a point in our lives where the age of accountability arises and we too have the same opportunity as Eve.

*I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.*

*10 The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. 11 For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12 So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Rom. 7:9-12*

**16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.**

We must fix the above now as a absolute truth. There are so many temptations to face and so much sorrow and anguish brought about because we must face them and often are brought to our knees by them. Sometimes one feels the need to explore these weaknesses and conclude that we must have been born this way and so consequently it must in some way be the fault of the one who created us. Do not be deceived here brethren. This is in the imperative mode so it is a command. We must never allow ourselves to be deceived:

*"planao... to cause to stray, to lead astray, lead aside from the right way; a. prop. to go astray, wander, roam about... b. metaph. to lead away from the truth, to lead into error, to deceive... pass. to be led into error, [ R. V. be led astray]... esp through ignorance to be led aside from the path of virtue, to astray, sin... to wander or fall away from the true faith, of heretic... to be led away into error and sin..."* (Thayer, p. 514)

Don't be led astray here. Don't wander from the path, don't allow error to lead you into fuzzy and wrong thinking. There are certain absolutes that must be accepted and acted upon regardless of what is occurring in our lives that we might want to interpret otherwise. God never tempts us to be led into death. He tests us to be led to maturity and strength, but never tempts us. It is not possible for our God or love and mercy to do such a thing.

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## 17 Every good gift (KJV)

### Every good thing bestowed (NAS)

#### All giving (that is) good and everything given (that is) complete

Here is another absolute. All that is good comes from God. Every good thing that happens in our lives comes forth from God, either from the creation or from his benevolence. The Spirit selected a term for "all" that denotes every and all of the class indicated:

*"pas,... all or any of the class indicated... b. any and every, of every kind, ... esp. with nouns designating virtues or vices, emotions, character, condition, to indicate every mode in which such virtue, vice or emotion manifests itself, or any object whatever to which the idea expressed by the noun belongs..."* (Thayer, p. 491-493; 3956).

Hence there is nothing good that did not come from God. It can be translated: "*All the good things bestowed,*" "*every good thing bestowed,*" "*any and every good thing bestowed.*" God is the author of only those things that are good. All that is good in the world came from Him. Every wonderful thing in our lives came from Him. All that gives us self-esteem and blessings that make life worth living came from Him. He is the source of all that is good. This is an absolute that we need to fix in our minds. The term good is a broad term for all that is in life that has any characteristic that would qualify it as good. It is defined:

*"agathos... excelling in any respect, distinguished, good. It can be predicated of persons, things, conditions, qualities and affections of the soul, deeds, times and seasons.... 1. of good constitution or nature... 2. useful, salutary... 3. of the feeling awakened by what is good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy... 4. excellent, distinguished... 5. upright, honorable... upright, free from guile, particularly from a desire to corrupt the people... pre-eminently of God, as consummately and essentially good... The neuter used substantively denotes 1. a good thing, convenience, advantage, ... 2. what is upright, honorable, and acceptable to God..."* (Thayer, p. 2-3; 18)

The definition is filled with synonyms of all that is good, precious and wonderful about life here under the sun and the one to come. That which is distinguished, useful, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, and happy. All that is honorable, excellent, upright, good. These are the things that our God created. Go back and look at the creation as it came directly from the hands of our loving Creator. This should be surprise us since God stressed it over and over during the creation.

Day 1: *And God saw that the light was **good**; and God separated the light from the darkness. Gen 1:4*

Day 3: *And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was **good**. Gen 1:10*

Day 3: *And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was **good**. Gen 1:12*

Day 4: *and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was **good**. Gen 1:18*

Day 5: *And God created the great sea monsters, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was **good**. Gen 1:21*

Day 6: *And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was **good**. Gen 1:25*

Day 6: *And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was **very good**. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Gen 1:31*

God gave us a very good world to live in. Although the world we now live in and the world that God gave us are not the same, this truth still continued. What intervened between the initial gift and today is the curse which God decreed, first to the serpent, then to Eve, and finally to Adam and the world he lived within. They died spiritually that very day, and also brought physical death into the world. All that is evil and terrible about life came from the curse. It was not God's will that we suffer and die, it came as a direct result of sin. We can't blame God, only ourselves. The world we now live in is described very differently from the one that came from His hands alone:

*"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." ... 13 And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. 14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind. 15 What is crooked*

*cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered. Eccl 1:2, 13-15*

The vanity, troubles and trials of this world did not come directly from God as something He initiated, God wanted a different world and a different life. All that now is came as a direct consequence of our actions. Not as a direct act of His will.

Although all the other translations repeat the word "gift" twice, they are different words in the original Greek the Holy Spirit used. There is a nuance to this first word that allows us to see it in two different ways. It can be translated either as the act of giving or the gift itself.

*dosis... 1. a giving... an account of giving and receiving... 2. a gift...* (Thayer, p. 157; 1394)

*dosis... denotes, properly, "the act of giving," Phil 4:15, euphemistically referring to "gifts" as a matter of debt and credit accounts; then, objectively, "a gift," James 1:17 (Vine's Expository Dictionary 1394)*

Some prefer the act of giving while others want both to be gifts. For myself, since both are true and the act of giving can be translated, it seems better to do so. Giving itself implies the intent of the gift. Hence God's intent in every act of giving and the actual gifts themselves are all good. God is a God who loves to give good to those who ask Him.

*"Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he shall ask for a fish, will he give him a snake, will he? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" Mt 7:7-11*

**and every perfect gift is from above,**

The Spirit now describes the actual gifts. Both the acts and reasons behind the giving and the gifts themselves share the same goodness. He repeats *pas* to again emphasize every class and kind of gift. They are perfect. This is the same term used in verse four to describe the value of trials to lead us to completion (*brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect*).

Everything that God gives to man lacks nothing to completeness. All His gifts are good, wholesome and fulfilling. When it is otherwise, then it is because man has tainted it. God gave things capable of perfection and goodness and man perverts and ruins it to other uses. God's "gifts" are perfect.

*"dorema... that which is given, a gift, present,"* (Liddell and Scott, Greek Lexicon NT: 1434)

As we can see, this word also emphasizes the source as well as the object. It is what is given, hence it is a gift. Nothing we have possess today did we gain ourselves. Everything we have and have the potential to have is a gift. Our body, soul, personality, strengths and weaknesses, all our potential, all our challenges and goals, all gifts from the God who created them all. All the evil things came not as a direct act of God's will, but as a consequence else is must be source from somewhere else. Consequences or direct actions of others, but never from God. When something bad happens we don't look to God because it didn't come from Him. All that comes from "above" are only good and wholesome, perfect and without any lack.

*"anothen... from above, from a higher place... from the upper part, from the top... often ... used of things which come from heaven, or from God as dwelling in heaven... (Thayer, p. 52; 509)*

Everything that comes from above is good and perfect. Thus if it is not good and perfect we must seek for another source. James used this same term later in the book with exactly the same idea. There is wisdom from above and wisdom from somewhere else. That which is from above has certain qualities. If these qualities are not present then it did not come from above.

*This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. James 3:15-18*

So also with our gifts from God. When we examine the wonderful things of life, we will find one thing to be constant and fixed. Every good act of giving, and every perfect gift came from above. It came from God. God gives all that is good. There is no other source for life, joy, happiness and all that is good. Paul commented also on this thought:

*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His*

*judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him {be} the glory forever. Amen. Rom. 11:32-38*

### **coming down from the Father of lights,**

All that is good and perfect is “coming down.”

“*katabaino...* to go down, come down, descend; 1. of persons; ...the place from which one has come down being evident from the context... 2. to come(i.e. be sent) down...” (Thayer, p. 329; 2597)

The idea James sought to convey is that when good things are enjoyed they came down from (*apo* - source and origin) above, while everything else is not coming down from above, but coming up from our own foolish deeds (coming up), or coming across either from our fellow men, or the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places.

These things originated within the Father and were sent down from Him to us. God is here given a designation found nowhere else in Scripture. “*Father of lights*” seems to be literal and not a symbolic designation. John revealed,

*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 1Jn. 1:5*

Since God is light, the heavenly bodies that He created are an imitation of Him. Something that will not be needed in the world to come:

*The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. Rev. 21:23*

So when we see the lights in the heavenly realm (sun moon and stars) only reflect and imitate, God himself, He is their Father, just as He is ours. He created light on the first day, and then created the light bearing bodies on the fourth. He is the father of all light, and there is nothing but good, wholesome and wonderful character to “*light*.”

“*phos... light...* 1. prop. a. univ... b. by meton. anything emitting light: a heavenly luminary (or star, ... fire, because it is light and gives light,... a lamp or torch... c. light i.e. brightness (Lat. *splendor*), ... 2. *phos* is often used in poetic discourse, in metaphor, and in parable...” (Thayer, p. 663-663; 5457)

### **with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.**

The one quality of light that does not adequately reflect the wonderful characteristics of our God is that light changes from hour to hour, day to day, and season to season. The light varies and the shadows shift. Thus it is a parable or metaphor that has a flaw that needs to be corrected. What comes down from the father of lights and what God intends for those who receive His gifts has not. Since the term “beside” is in the dative, it places God “*near by, beside, in the power of, in the presence of, or with.*”

“*para...* a preposition indicating close proximity, with various modifications corresponding to the various cases with which it is joined...with the DATIVE, *para* indicates that something is or is done either in immediate vicinity of someone, or (metaph.) in his mind, *near by, beside, in the power of, in the presence of, with...*” (Thayer, p. 478; 3844)

This is the different between the lights as children and the Father Himself. When we are beside God, in the presence of or with God, there is no variation, there is no shadow, there is no turning. From God there is only on bright shining continuous flow of giving. There can be no change or variation with Him:

“*parallage... variation, change...*” (Thayer, p. 484; 3883)

He is faithful and unchangeable. The great I AM that I AM. There is no change cast by turning with Him either. The Greek were accustomed use this term regarding the solstices that occur in the summer and winter, “*when the sun appears to turn his course and cross the ecliptic,*” or of the turning of the heavenly bodies. There is none of this with God.

“*trope... trepho a turn, turning: ... 1. tropai helioio the tropics or solstices, i.e. midsummer and midwinter, Lat. solstitium and bruma, when the sun appears to turn his course and cross the ecliptic. ... when tropai is used alone, it mostly refers to the winter solstice, 2. a turn, change, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:5157*

“*trope ... a turning: of the heavenly bodies,...*” (Thayer, p. 631; 5157)

With this turning comes the inevitable shadow that moves whenever the light is blocked.

“*aposkiasma... a shade cast by one object upon another, a shadow... shadow cast by revolution...*” (Thayer, p. 67; 644)

There is no turning, not shifting shadows or variation at all in the Father of lights. Only a continuous stream of goodness in giving and perfection in gifts. We should never be deceived, anything other than that did not come from Him.

### **18 Of His own will He brought us forth**

A concrete and indisputable example. God did not have to create us (brought forth the first time), and God did not have to redeem us (born again – brought forth a second time).

*“apokueo... to bring forth from the womb, give birth to... to produce...”* (Thayer, p. 64; 616)

This is a pure example of the kind of loving giving God that He is. He chose in the exercise of His own Will to bring us forth. We should need no more than this. This is the very argument Paul put forth in Romans:

*For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath {of God} through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Rom 5:7-11*

It was only His will. This is a different term for “will” that is only used a few times in the New Testament and only here of God:

*“boulomai...to will, wish; and 1. commonly to will deliberately, have a purpose, be minded... 2. of willing as a affection, to desire...”* (Thayer, p. 105; 1014)

God desired, willed and purposed to bring us forth. There was no force and prior to the first creation, no compelling reason for Him to bring us forth since He knew it would lead to the need for redemption, but He did so and that is the example used here.

### **by the word of truth,**

God designed and created the word of truth with the power to bring us forth. Peter developed this a little further than James. He described the word of truth as the word of God which lives and abides forever. The incorruptible seed of the word of God.

*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, 24 because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, 25 But the word of the Lord endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:22-25*

### **so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.**

All of this was done for one specific purpose (*eis* – end, purpose, result). Literally with the infinitive verb of being: So that we “*to be*” This was His purpose and plan to make us into something more than we had become after we had sinned. He wanted us to be “*first fruits*.” This is a tough concept because the true first fruits would be Abel, Enoch, or Noah. Even though the first generation Christians were in a sense His first fruits, they were joined to the spirits of just men made perfect. (Heb 12:22-24).

There appears to be two paths open to us. The first would be that as the firstborn not only meant those who were first to open the womb, but those who have the preeminence. Jesus was the firstborn over all creation, not meaning He was the first to be created, but that he had the preeminence over all creation. Since we are all the firstborn in the church, it doesn't have to do with order of time, but also with preeminence.

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, Col. 1:15-16*

*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom. 8:29*

*to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, Heb. 12:23*

Another possibility is that all Christians are the first fruits of the entire creation. That we have been redeemed, and our redemption is the promise of a future redemption.

*For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21*

because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.  
Rom. 8:19-24

We could be the first fruits among His creatures. God wanted us with Him. That is the entire purpose of the creation and redemption of mankind. There is no other reason than this. We need to keep this clearly in mind as an absolute. There is no other explanation than this.

*“aparche... a. to offer firstlings or first-fruits b. to take away the first fruits... the first-fruits of the productions of the earth ...”* (Thayer, p. 54; 536)

*“ktisma... thing founded; created thing (Vulg. creatura) [A.V. creature] ...”* (Thayer, p. 363; 2938)

As we now move into the final section, it is good to review the flow of the book James has written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Christians are going to endure trials. The only variable is whether they endure them well or poorly. Whether they endure them in faith and submission to God or whether they rebel in their trials and cast accusations of mistreatment at God. If they choose the former, these trials can actually do great good. This does not mean that God sent them, or even wanted them to happen, but in the overall scheme of God’s working out His plan in a sin-cursed world sometimes these things are going to happen. When they happen to us, we have clear Scripture on what we are to do. There are so many variables, so many misconceptions, so many difficult to comprehend things that can occur. James has gone step by step down the list:

- 2-3 You must have *“all joy”* when you encounter *“various trials”*
- 4-8 If you cannot understand then ask for wisdom.
- 9-11 Dealing with the trials of adversity and prosperity.
- 12 Those who do endure their trials are blessed.
- 13-18 The proper view of God when dealing with trials.
  - A. The truth about temptation. God has nothing to do with it. We all put ourselves there. We have no one but us to blame. We must take personal responsibility. 13-16
  - B. The truth about God’s rule over the universe. Though things may sometimes look otherwise, God only gives good things. Never mistake the bad as coming directly from Him. (Don’t make Job’s mistake)17-18
- Final Conclusions
- 19-20 Be careful, how you hear(be swift), how you speak(be slow), and how you become angry(be slow).
- 21-25 Prove yourselves doers of the Word and not just hearers only.
- 26-27 Pure Religion: Watch your tongue, help others in their afflictions and keep yourself pure.

**19 So then, my beloved brethren,  
 19 {This} you know, my beloved brethren.**

The difference between the NKJV and NASB centers on an iota vs an omega in the first letter of the word ( &iste %wste ). This works out to about the difference between a “m” and an “n” or an “i” and a “u”. Fortunately within the context of the passage it doesn’t really matter which word is correct, since they both end up with a similar thought. Either the Spirit is giving them the specific “you know this”, or He is telling them to draw this as a conclusion. The term “know” is defined:

*“oida... lat. video... The tenses coming from eido and retained by usage form two families, of which one signifies to see, the other to know... 1. to see 1. to perceive(with the eyes)... 2. lat. video, to perceive by any of the senses... 3. univ to perceive, notice, discern, discover... 4. to see, i.e. to turn the eyes, the mind, the attention to anything; a. to pay attention, observe... b. ... to see about something i.e. to ascertain what must be done about it... c. to inspect, examine... d. to look at, behold... 5. to experience, any state of condition... 6. to see i.e. have an interview with, to visit...”* (Thayer, p. 172-174; 1492)

Again, the difference is insignificant. Either, it is because you have known or seen all this (if it is oida) or what follows is the the logical conclusion that should be drawn based on the above this is the proper word, then the Spirit expects us to see and acknowledge these things as true. You know that God would never tempt any one with evil, that only good things come forth from him and all these things must be taken in that context. If it is the other term, then it is defined:

*'oste ... (with the rough breathing pronounced hoste), "hoste, ...a consecutive conjunction, i. e. expressing consequence or result,...1. so that,... it is also used of a designed result, so as to i.q. in order to, for to... 2. so then, therefore, wherefore..." (Thayer, p. 683; 5620).*

It then becomes a simple bridge. All the above being admittedly true, the end result that will follow is... With this understanding there really is no difference in the concepts.

### **let everyone be swift to hear,**

Every true Christian knows and has made the proper conclusions regarding the facts of this chapter up to this point. Yet in spite of that knowledge God gives a strong warning. The verb of being here translated "*be*" is in the imperative mode, so this is a command. Every Christian regardless of spiritual maturity and understanding must never lose sight of this obligation. As a matter of fact, the more truth we already have the more we should fulfill this passage as we are thereby enhanced to glean and understand even more. We should all be very "swift" to hear.

*"tachus... of motion, quick, swift, fleet, opp. to bradus ... II. of thought and purpose, quick, rapid, hasty, ... speed, haste, ... 2. so of actions, events, quick, rapid, sudden, (Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon. NT: 5036)*

God wants to see a quick, speedy, and attentive mind whenever His word is being discussed or contemplated. We need to have a fleet mind. Swift to learn, quick to understand and speedy to change. We are to be swift to (*eis - purpose, end result, object*) So the direction of our haste and speed and its purpose and object is to hear as God wants us to hear.

This is the end to which the swiftness is directed. We are to be swift toward the direction of hearing and listening to the truths of God's word. The term "hear" is defined:

*"akouo... to hear I. absol. 1. to be endowed with the faculty of hearing (not deaf)... 2. to attend to (use of the faculty of hearing), consider what is or has been said... 3. trop. to understand, perceive the sense of what is said... II. ... 1. to hear something... b. to get by hearing, learn... c ... a thing comes to ones ears, to find out (by hearsay), learn...d. to give ear to teaching or teacher... e. to comprehend, understand, 2. ... unless one hear the person or thing with his own ears... a. aa. to perceive any one's voice... b. to give ear to one, listen, hearken..." (Thayer, p. 22-23; 191)*

Note the breadth of the term. It means to hear with the ear, then to attend to what was heard (properly use their ears), then to understand perceive, comprehend and what was heard. We should all be swift, speedy and rapid in our attempts to hear, attend to and understand the truth. God is seeking for such. Both Cornelius and the Bereans manifest such an attitude:

*"And so I sent to you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord." Acts 10:33  
Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. Acts 17:11-12*

Those who want to hear all that has been commanded, and who receive that word with great eagerness and examine the Scriptures daily to see if they are so are the quality of hearers that God seeks. We are only cutting ourselves off from great wisdom and understanding when we do not seek for truth by being swift to hear. There are other passages that also describe what God does and does not want to see in a hearer:

*And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, ... And he read therein ... from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.... and Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshiped Jehovah with their faces to the ground. .. And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading Neh. 8:2-8*

*"As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, 'Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.' 31 So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. 32 Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them. Ezek 33:30-33*

*Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does*

not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him." Lk. 8:18

So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king." 1Sam. 15:22-23

I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food. Job. 23:12

"But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets" (Zech. 7:11,12).

But God wants us to not only be swift to hear, but also ...

### **slow to speak**

The term "slow" is defined another Greek word that has come into our language. Bradycardia is a slow heart rate and tachycardia is a fast heart rate. The term brady means too slow. This is the basic meaning of the term:

"*bradus...* :-slow, slowest at running, 2.of the mind, *slowness*, II. of Time, *tardy, late*, Soph., (Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon, NT: 1021)

So we have opposites, we must be swift in regard to hearing and slow in regard to speaking. God wants us to be slow to speak. The term "to" is the same one as in the previous verse (*eis - purpose, end result, object*) . So again, this is the end purpose and object to which the slowness must be directed. We are to be slow toward the direction of speaking The term "speak" is defined:

"*laleo...* The distinction which indeed exists between the words may in this way be made clear.

**There are two leading aspects under which speech may be regarded. It may, first, be contemplated as the articulate utterance of human language, in contrast with the absence of this, from whatever cause springing; whether from choice, as in those who hold their peace, when they might speak; or from the present undeveloped condition of the organs and faculties, as in the case of infants or from natural defects, as in the case of those born dumb; or from the fact of speech lying beyond the sphere of the faculties with which as creatures they have been endowed, as in the lower animals.** This is one aspect of speech, namely articulated words, as contrasted with silence, with mere sounds or animal cries. But, **secondly, speech ('oratio' or 'oris ratio') may be regarded as the orderly linking and knitting together in connected discourse of the inward thoughts and feelings of the mind, ... Thus the dumb man (*alalos*, Mark 7:37), restored to human speech, *elalese*, (Matt 9:33; Luke 11:14), the Evangelists fitly using this word, for they are not concerned to report what the man said, but only the fact that he who before was dumb, was now able to employ his organs of speech. ... But if in *lalein*, the fact of uttering articulated speech is the prominent notion, in *legein*, it is the words uttered, and that these correspond to reasonable thoughts within the breast of the utterer.** Thus while the parrot or talking automaton (Rev. 13:15) may be said, though even they not without a certain impropriety, *lalein*, seeing they produce sounds imitative of human speech; and in poetry, though by a still stronger figure, a *lalein* may be ascribed to grasshoppers (Theocritus , Idyl. v. 34), and to pipes and flutes (Idyl. xx. 28, 29); yet inasmuch as there is nothing behind these sounds, they could never be said *legein*, for in the *legein*, lies ever the *ennoia* or thought of the mind (Heb 4:12), Often as the words occur together, in such phrases as *elalese legon* (Mark 6:50; Luke 24:6), *laletheis logos* (Heb 2:2), and the like, each remains true to its own meaning, as just laid down. Thus in the first of these passages *elalese* will express the opening of the mouth to speak, as opposed to the remaining silent (Acts 18:9); while *legon* proceeds to declare what the speaker actually said. Nor is there, I believe, any passage in the N. T. where the distinction between them has not been observed. Thus at Rom 15:18; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 1:8, there is no difficulty in giving to *lalein* its proper meaning; indeed all these passages gain rather than lose when this is done; while at Rom 3:19 there is an instructive interchange of the words. (Trench's Synonyms of the NT 2980)

Note that the emphasis on this passage centers on the forming of words and speaking. It is not dialogue in the mind, but dialogue of the tongue. When hearing something new, be swift to listen and slow to speak.

A casual look at the history of God's people shows clearly why God is so concerned about His people listening. So much more often were God's people led into or remained in apostasy

because they were too quick to speak and too slow to listen and make changes. Jesus' near failure among the Jews was a direct result of people ignoring this great principle. Most of those in the denominations are also guilty of this. They close their minds and are always too quick to speak and too slow to listen. Are we? God has told us over and over again in every possible way that we must be very careful with our words.

*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise. 20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver* Pr. 10:19-20

*He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. 28 Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.* Pr. 17:27-28

*Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.* Pr. 21:23

*Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.* Pr. 29:20

*Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few. 3 For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool's voice is known by his many words.* Ecc. 5:2

*If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.* James 1:26

*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.*

*36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."*

M.t 12:34-37

*"Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? 3 Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.* Job 38:2-3

*"Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: 8 "Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? Job 40:7-8*

*"Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. 5 Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further." Job 40:4-5*

James now moves to the final consideration on advising us of the need to be very careful in our minds in the initial acceptance of the truth.

### **{and} slow to anger;**

The Holy Spirit repeated both the term "slow" and the term "to." Hence we are again to do the exact opposite with anger as we were told to do with hearing. God wants us to be slow for the purpose of anger, because once again, "to" (eis) is the end to which the slowness is directed.

We are to be slow toward the direction of "anger." This term is defined:

*"orge,...(fr orgao to teem, denoting an internal motion, esp that of plants and fruits swelling with juice... the natural disposition, temper, character; movement or agitation of soul, impulse, desire, any violent emotion, but esp. (and chiefly in Attic) anger. In bibl. Grk. anger, wrath, indignation... anger exhibited in punishing, hence used for the punishment itself... The orge attributed to God in the N. T. is that in God which stands opposed to man's disobedience, obduracy(esp in resisting the gospel) and sin, and manifests itself in punishing the same... wrath, outburst of anger,... to provoke, arouse to anger; pass. to be provoked to anger, be angry, be wroth,;..." (Thayer, p. 452; 3709)*

*orge, thumos ... When these words, after a considerable anterior history, came to settle down on the passion of anger, as the strongest of all passions, impulses, and desires (see Donaldson, New Cratylus, 3 rd ed. pp. 675-679; and Thompson, Phædrus of Plato , p. 165), the distinguishing of them occupied not a little the grammarians and philologers. These felt, and rightly, that the existence of a multitude of passages in which the two were indifferently used (as Plato , Legg. ix. 867), made nothing against the fact of such a distinction; for, in seeking to discriminate between them, they assumed nothing more than that these could not be indifferently used on every occasion.*

**The general result at which they arrived is this, that in thumos, connected with the intransitive thuo ... is more of the turbulent commotion, the boiling agitation of the feelings, ... St. Basil calls it, either presently to subside and disappear,... — or else to settle down into orge wherein is more of an abiding and settled habit of mind ('ira inveterata') with the purpose of revenge; ... This, the more passionate, and at the same time more temporary, character of thumos (thumoi) ... according to Jeremy Taylor, are 'great but transient angers;' ... Aristotle , too, in his wonderful comparison of old age and youth, thus characterizes the angers of old men (Rhet . ii. 11): ... thumoi ... —like fire in straw, quickly blazing up, and as quickly extinguished**

..." (Trench's Synonyms of the NT: 3709)

James selects the more settled term for anger that once created stays in the mind. It is aroused every time one sees or thinks about its object. While under either form, one is no longer rational, James chooses *orge*. We must learn to move this emotion to the back burner, not allowing it to be easily generated. God has revealed again and again the danger of anger in both its forms:

*Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Ps 4:4*

*An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression. Pr. 29:22*

*A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention. Pr. 15:18*

*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. Pr. 16:32*

*The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression Pr. 19:11*

*Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools. Eccl. 7:9*

*Be angry, and do not sin: let not the sun go down on your wrath, Eph. 4:26*

*7 Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath;*

*Do not fret — it only causes harm. 9 For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth. Ps. 37:7-9*

Cain, Moses and Aaron, Naaman and Jonah were all under the influence of anger when they made terrible mistakes in judgement and sinned.

*but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." Gen 4:5-7*

*And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. 12 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." Num. 20:10-12*

*They angered Him also at the waters of strife, So that it went ill with Moses on account of them; 33 Because they rebelled against His Spirit, So that he spoke rashly (unadvisedly asv) with his lips. Ps. 106:32-33*

*But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.' 12 Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. 2 Kings 5:11-14*

*But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2 So he prayed to the Lord, and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. 3 Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!" 4 Then the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Jonah 4:1-4*

*Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" 10 But the Lord said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left — and much livestock?" Jonah 4:9-11*

In love and compassion, God does not want to see this in His true people. It is too dangerous to allow to form at all and must be carefully managed. We must learn to be quick to listen and understand, and slow to speak back or lash out in anger.

### **20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.**

That which one sees over and over in the Scriptures is now bluntly put forth as truth. Man's anger doesn't achieve God's righteousness. We all need to remember this the next time we become angry. When ever we are thinking that something needs to be done, done now and

done by me, we need to stop. At that moment, we are at our least potential for actually accomplishing it. Parents, must will be unable to properly discipline their children when they are angry. Don't use this as a crutch. The term "achieve" is defined:

*"ergazomai... 1. absol. a. to work, labor, do work: it is opposed to inactivity or idleness... b. to trade, to make gains by trading ... 2. trans. a. (to work i. e.) to do, work out... with acc. of virtues or vices, (to work i. e.) to exercise, perform, commit... b. to work for, earn by working, to acquire..."* (Thayer, p. 247; 2038)

Take whoever you want, Cain, Moses speaking to the rock, Nabal's anger at David, or the anger of the Jews at their prophets who taught them truth. You see that when man is under the influence of this emotion, he is incapable of fulfilling God's righteousness:

*"dikaiosune... the virtue or quality or state of one who is dikaios; 1. in the broad sense, the state of him who is such as he ought to be, righteousness... the condition acceptable to God... a. univ. ... the doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain to a state approved of God... b. integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling and acting..."* (Thayer, p. 149; 1343)

God seeks for integrity, virtue, purity correctness and thinking, feeling and acting. Man's anger can't accomplish it. Therefore we must be very slow to become angry, especially in the context of hearing the word of God. When speaking with others, especially in areas of doctrine and morality that is new and has not been discussed before, be very careful about becoming angry and about speaking too quickly.

### **21 Therefore lay aside (putting aside) all filthiness**

With another "therefore," James holds on to this thought as he moves into a new area. This term is defined:

*"dio... wherefore, on which account..."* (Thayer, p. 152; 1352)

*"dio, dioper, relatively emphatic markers of result, usually denoting the fact that the inference is self-evident - 'therefore, for this reason, for this very reason, so then.'* (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:1352)

If we are doing all the above, it is obvious and self-evident that we must get rid of all filthiness and wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word. Since this is among the most often discussed subject in the Scriptures if we are truly swift to hear, this is exactly what we will be doing. If not, we are that man or woman who looks in a mirror then forgets. God will not take us step by step through the process of how to hear His Word. First we must put aside filthiness and wickedness. "Put aside" is defined:

*"apotithemi... to put off or aside; in the N. T. only middle to put off from one's self... to lay up or away... trop. those things are said to be put off or away which any one gives up, renounces..."* (Thayer, p. 69; 659)

*apotithemai ... (a figurative extension of meaning of apotithemai), 'to put away,' 85.44) to cease doing what one is accustomed to doing - 'to stop, to cease.' ... 'stop living the way you did formerly' (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:659)*

The process is much more painful and difficult than it may appear. It will require both cutting off, plucking out, and potting to death .

*And if your hand causes you to sin, **cut it off**. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, **cut it off**. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, **tear it out**. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'* 49 For everyone will be salted with fire. Mk. 9:43-50

*Therefore **put to death** your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. Col 3:5-7*

The term for put aside is also used in these other passages.

*that you **put off**, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore, **putting away** lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," Eph. 4:22-25  
But now you yourselves are to **put off** all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language*

out of your mouth. *Col. 3:8-9*

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us **lay aside** every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, *Heb. 12:1-2*

The main idea here is in taking something off or putting something aside. In this case, it is not garments as a figure, but “filthiness.”

“*hruparia ... (hruparos) filthiness... metaph of wickedness as moral defilement... [of sordidness...] ...*” (Thayer, p. 564; 4507)

“*hruparos... filthy, dirty: prop. of clothing... metaph. defiled with iniquity, base ...[(in the sense of sordid, mean...)]...*” (Thayer, p. 564; 4508)

Moral filth, moral smut, moral dirt, moral defilement. To God it is all nauseating. He is not tempted with this garbage, He tempts no one with this garbage, and He wants us to remove it from our lives. This is just another term to describe the vile nature of sin to God. It is dirty and filthy to Him, again much in the same way as physical filth is to the nose of man, only to a worse degree.

The wicked corruption and filth of sin must be put off, laid away, given up and renounced. All forms of ungodliness and sin must be removed. There can be no place for it in the heart of God’s children. Sin to the heart, soul and emotions of man does much the same as a foul stench would to the nose. If we stain our clothes with oil or another stinking chemical and they try to eat or drink with that smell, it permeates our nostrils and we cannot enjoy it. Just as the delicate smells and tastes are destroyed by the foul smell, the beauty and purity of God’s Word cannot be appreciated and clearly seen by those who’s mind is sullied with filth. When God’s word points out something as wrong and we are permeated in sin, we often cannot see it and consequently make up excuses and reasons that it is all right. It causes prejudice and keeps us from seeing clearly its like weeds that block the sun on a plant. Its like film on the window of a house which makes it impossible to see out clearly. We must get rid of it, and along with it...

**and overflow (all that remains) of wickedness,**

James couples to the description of sin as filth the idea that it is an overflow of wickedness. The term “*overflow*” is defined.

“*perisseia... 1. abundance... adverbially, superabundantly, superfluously, ... 2. superiority; preference, pre-eminence... 3. gain, profit... 4. residue, remains...*” (Thayer, p. 505; 4050)

“*perisseia... It the NT it is used of the superabundant fulness of the time of salvation, whether it be that of God's grace and righteousness poured forth in Christ in contrast to the dominion of death in the old aeon (Rom 5:17), or that of over flowing Christian joy which is prepared to be generous in spite of poverty (2 Cor 8:2). According to 2 Cor 10:15 Paul hopes for new and unbounded missionary victories when the Corinthian church shows obedient submission. In James 1:21 perisseia kakias does not denote a remnant of wickedness. ... in accordance with the basic sense of perisseuein the term describes the wickedness which is to be set aside as "exceedingly great."* (Kittel, TDWNT NT:4050)

The spilling over of filth from our past life into our present life, the spilling over of our thoughts into our words and actions, are possibly both under consideration. God wants our hearts, minds, and lives to be clean. He wants us to understand that there is no such thing as a small amount of wickedness. He doesn’t look at it that way. If we are guilty of one point we are guilty of all, so any sin is an overflowing of evil and wickedness:

“*kakia... 1. malignity, malice, ill-will, desire to injure... 2. wickedness, depravity... wickedness that is not ashamed to break the laws,...*” (Thayer p 320, NT:2549)

“*kakia... kakos, badness in quality, opp. to arete, (excellence), defects, ... 2. cowardice, sloth, ... 3. moral badness, wickedness, vice, ... II. ill-repute, III. evil suffered, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon, NT: 2549)*

To see this term defined as the opposite of *arete* (*virtue – as the best anything can be*) would mean that this term describes the worst that anything can be. It is an evil term with a malicious overtone. It is not just evil, it is evil with malice, ill-will and a desire to injure. It matters little whether this desire was directed toward God, our fellow-man or even toward ourselves. It must be destroyed and forever removed.

**and receive with meekness the implanted word,**

After removing and putting wickedness aside, we must also “receive” a much more precious and sweet smelling commodity.

“*dechomai* ... signifies “to accept,” by a deliberate and ready reception of what is offered...” (from Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:1209)

“*dechomai*... lambano, lempsis ... to receive or accept an object or benefit for which the initiative rests with the giver, but the focus of attention in the transfer is upon the receiver - 'to receive, receiving, to accept.' ... (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, NT 1209)

Although the word of God is something “for which the initiative rests with the giver,” (God), in this context “*the focus of attention in the transfer is upon the receiver.*” We must be the ones to receive it. Only by faith and submission to its conditions can the word of God be received by those who are swift to hear. The best possible way to receive it is “in humility.” The preposition “in” is often used to describe either the place in the midst of which it can be done or the means by which it can be done. This can only be found in the midst of “meekness.”

*prautes*... *Gentleness, mildness, meekness*...” (Thayer, p. 535; 4236)

The meaning of “*prautes*” is **not readily expressed in English**, for the terms **meekness, mildness**, commonly used, **suggest weakness** to a greater or less extent, whereas “*prautes*” **does nothing of the kind. It must be clearly understood**, therefore, that the common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself; but **the Lord was ‘meek’ because he had the infinite resources of God at His command** Described negatively, **meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest**; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because **it is not occupied with self at all**. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary)

“*prautes*... “**mild and gentle friendliness**,”... the **opposite of roughness ...bad temper, or sudden anger/brusqueness**... Among the Greeks “gentle friendliness” is highly prized as a social virtue in human relationships... The systematic thinker Aristotle places *prautes* as... a mean between “*orgilotes*” (“anger,” “bad temper”) and the spineless incompetence of “*aorgesia*” ... (Kittel, Vol 6 p 645-646)

It is a term that describes several things. Meekness is that great word of both control and of gentleness. It is the horse broken to the bit, the watchdog to the command of the owner, the gasoline engine to to control of the gas pedal. Great strength subdued and harnessed. In this case it is harnessed to the will of God.

*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Phil. 2:3-4*

In meekness we see our strength harnessed and controlled, as a horse broken to the bit, or the engine controlled by the carburetor. Like the water in a mountain stream can at times where the incline is steep and with many boulders, the water is turbulent. But can also be smoothed out quickly on level ground with a sandy bottom, where it becomes placid and smooth. The power of the water is still there, but with meekness it it can now be used.

That is what meekness is, and that is exactly what is needed when the word is preached and we quickly hear it and seek to apply it. The human spirit is much like water, in anger and frustration it boils much like water over boulders, it is uncontrollable and not conducive to spiritual growth. James counsels us to use meekness, strength harnessed, gentleness and control of spirit in mildness to accept the teachings of the Scripture. How many times have we seen God’s people kill the messenger bringing them the very information they need to get right with God because they didn’t have the meekness to receive and act upon it. That ought to be instructive to each of us. There is a grave danger that we will miss some great point of Scripture unless we cultivate this meek attitude of receiving the word.

### **the implanted word,**

This is a very wonderful way to describe the word of God. It is defined:

“*emphutos*... *in born, implanted by nature;... implanted by other’s instruction*... Thus Jas. 1:21...” (Thayer, p. 209; 1721)

“*emphutos*... 'to be implanted,' not occurring in the NT) to be permanently in a place, with the implication of development - 'placed in, permanently established in, implanted.' (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:1721)

God's word is much like seed planted in the ground, or the grafting in of branches. In the parable of the sower, Jesus describes the powerful action of this implantation in the good and honest heart. It yields the fruit. NOTE: it is not the heart that has the power to produce, but the implanted word. The word of God is the seed Lk 8:11; if we receive it into our hearts it grows and produces fruit. Lk 8:15.

*And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? Rom. 11:17-21*

### **which is able to save your souls.**

This word must be accepted with meekness because of the great power it has to help us. It is "able" to save our souls.

*"dunamai... to be able, have power, whether by virtue of one's own ability and resources, or of a state of mind, or through favorable circumstances, or by permission of law or custom... to be able to do something... to be able, capable, strong, powerful..."* (Thayer, p. 158-159; 1410)

God's implanted word has the power, is capable and strong enough to save our soul. All we have to do is accept and act upon it without anger or rebellion, swift to hear it and accept it with humility. The term "save" is defined:

*"sozo... to save, to keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction (opp. to apollumi)... a. univ., tina ... one (from injury or peril); to save a suffering one (from perishing) e. g. one suffering from disease to make well, heal, restore to health: to preserve one who is in danger of destruction, to save (i.e. to rescue)... b. to save in the technical biblical sense; negatively, to deliver from the penalties of the Messianic judgment,... to save from the evils which obstruct the reception of the Messianic deliverance..."* (Thayer, p. 610-611; 4982)

God's word does this to man's soul. It saves and keeps it safe and sound. It rescues it from danger and destruction. It heals and restores to health. It is for this reason that we should be so quick to obey this command.

James 1:22-27

### **22 But be doers of the word,**

While there is a great sense of satisfaction those who receive have the opportunity to hear God's word and have possession of it, if it is not acted upon, it actually becomes a curse instead of a blessing. The word of God is living and powerful (Heb. 4:12), and it can't lie dormant in the human heart. It either moves to action, or the heart itself becomes calloused and hardened as it protects itself from the offended conscience.

*Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, 18 and **know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law,** 19 and are confident that you yourself are **a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes,** having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. 21 **You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?** You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? 22 You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? 24 **For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written. Rom 2:17-24***

When we know the word, and can preach the word, but we do not practice it, it bears the terrible blight of hypocrisy. God had complained about this even back in the days of Ezekiel.

*As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, 'Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.' 31 **So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain.** 32 **Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.** 33 And when this comes to*

pass — surely it will come — then they will know that a prophet has been among them.” Ezek. 33:30-32:

God’s word has been designed and created to be heard. Faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17), so the more that is heard the stronger the faith becomes, but faith without works is dead. There is a terrible contradiction when we hear God’s word, but we are not doers. It is not enough to become a submissive hearer in our listening. It must be brought to completion by carry it though into our life. Multitudes of people have heard a good sermon and accepted it with meekness, yet if they never do anything with it, it is useless. The term “doers” is defined:

“*poieo*... I. to make ... 1. ... a. with the names of the things made, to produce, construct, form, fashion, etc. ... to create produce: of God, as the author of all things... absol. of men, to labor, to do work... to be operative, exercise activity ... b. joined to nouns denoting a state or condition, it signifies to be the author or, to cause ...” (Thayer, p. 524-527; 4160)

The main idea of this term is making products, doing labor, being the author(bringing something about), and carrying out, executing and performing something. We must be such “doers” of God’s word. We need to be producing, laboring authoring deeds and acts of kindness and carrying it out in our lives. We must hear to do.

“Therefore whoever **hears these sayings of Mine, and does them**, I will liken him to a **wise man who built his house on the rock**: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 “But **everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand**: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” Mt. 7:24-27

As noted above, hearing is a great and wonderful thing. To be “swift to hear” is a great blessing. But hearing alone is not enough. If we hear, but never do, our hearing will not profit us at all. **and not hearers only,**

God doesn’t want us to be “only” hearers.

“*monos*,... 1. an adjective alone (without a companion); a. with verbs... b. it is joined with its noun to other verbs also so that what is predicated may be declared to apply to some one person along... 2. alone, only, merely... referring to an action expressed by a verb” (Thayer, p. 418; 3441).

If all we do is listen and hear, if that is the only thing and all alone and isolated from the deeds, then it is worthless. Those who hear and do nothing do not even receive the benefit of hearing it. It is even worse than not hearing at all for those who know to do are counted worthy of more stripes than those who did not.

And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more. Luke 12:47-48

### **deceiving yourselves.**

This term is defined:

“*paralogizomai*...a. to reckon wrong, miscount... b. to cheat by false reckoning... To deceive by false reasoning... c. hence univ. to deceive, delude, circumvent...” (Thayer p 484 NT:3884)

*paralogizomai* ... I. in keeping accounts, to misreckon, miscalculate, Dem. ... 2. to cheat out of a thing, to defraud of, ... II. to mislead by fallacious reasoning, Aeschin.:—Pass. to be so misled, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon, NT:3884)

Although there is something ennobling and special about hearing God’s word, if we allow those feelings to permeate our heart without actually producing the things we have heard in our hearts, then we are reckoning wrong and miscounting. The more we hear the more we are expected to do, and the greater the judgment will be against us.

If we feel clean and wonderful by hearing only, but we do not feel the need to make some changes, then we are deceived, deluded and have allowed false reasoning to enter into our heart. We only hurt ourselves because you cannot hear God’s word without acting upon it if a hardening is occurring. It can be a selective hardening that leads us to feel good about ourselves when the sad reality is that we are not at all what God wants us to be. So many times Israel rejected the words of their prophets, but still spoke highly of them.

**23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his**

## **natural face in a mirror;**

Once again, James connects his thoughts with “*for - hoti — the reason why anything is said to be, it is added to a speaker’s words to show what ground he gives for his opinion.*” So this will be a parable that will give the reason why and the ground for the conclusion that one is only deceiving themselves if they hear God’s word, but never do anything about it.

James introduces a parable or illustration that makes very clear what God wants us to understand by his words. Those who only hear without doing are like a man who looks at his face in a mirror. What is the point of this illustration?

Many ideas have been set forth. The most logical is that which stays within the context. The context stresses Christians who see spiritual things about their character and then do nothing about them. How is a man who looks in a mirror like that? This man looks at his face in the mirror. Truly looks at it, sees all the flaws, all the problems and imperfections. Only if we carry it through that he sees a spot on his face or his hair is not properly fixed, but he doesn’t do anything about it.

The other possibility is the sad but true reality that when we see ourselves in the mirror, we are not always happy with what we see. As we age and look at the wrinkles, grey and balding hair, we don’t at all like what we see. Yet as soon as we step away from the mirror all that is forgotten and we are no longer self-conscious because we have forgotten all there is about our face that we don’t like.

## **24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.**

He looks long and intently, but after he leaves, he cannot recall what he looks like. How often do we look into a mirror, and even after looking, we still have no idea what we really look like, we must look again and again into the mirror to keep a clear picture of ourselves.

In order to keep a clear picture of ourselves and have a clear idea of what we really look like, we must constantly be looking into the spiritual mirror. If we are not continually comparing ourselves with what God demands that we be and attempt to do those things, then we will never change and we will never really know what we look like. The end of many a man’s path who thought it was right are the ways of death. Only by constantly looking into the mirror with a desire to fix what we see have we any hope of becoming all God seeks from us.

So as we look into a physical mirror and consider our fleshly face, we need to remember that God’s word is just like that mirror. When we see a problem and forget to fix it, then later in the day, see it again, we need to make the application that this is exactly what God’s word does to our soul, and if we don’t act on it while we see it, we will soon forget and it will all be for nothing.

## **25 But one who looks intently**

He now sums up the previous thoughts into this one final comment. If we truly “*receive with meekness the implanted word,*” and have truly become “*doers of the word, and not hearers only,*” then we are now prepared to accept his final conclusion. This is what is actually involved in *receiving with meekness,*” and “*doing.*” This is a very interesting term that needs more than one definition to get a full and clear picture.

*“parakupto... to stoop to... a thing in order to look at it; to look at with the head bowed forwards; to look into with the body bent; to stoop and look into... metaph. to look carefully into, inspect curiously... of one who would become acquainted with something...” (Thayer, p. 484; 3879)*

*“parakupto... b ‘to stoop and look into,’ 24.13) to make considerable effort in order to try to find out something - ‘to try to learn, to desire to learn.’ ... ‘things which (even) the angels desire to learn about’ 1 Peter 1:12. (Lou & Nida Greek-English Lexicon NT:3879)*

*parakupto lit. and primarily, “to stoop sideways” para, “aside,” kupto, “to bend forward”), denotes “to stoop to look into,” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT: 3879)*

This is a look that begins with great intensity and desire to see and ends with the intention to make whatever changes are necessary. It is like being in the dark and hearing a noise that doesn’t fit with the circumstances and may require fight or flight. Whenever we are hearing God’s word there is the possibility that something will be heard that requires immediate changes in order to avoid great danger. So this is not just a casual look, it is intense, with the body bent and stooped, prepared to make instant corrections depending on what is seen.

It is also the curious look at something that could bring great reward. When we see something that might be very valuable, we stop and look at it from every angle to get the best possible perspective. The Christian must have a strong curiosity for all the doctrines, morals and teachings of Christ in the law. He can never get enough of it, always hearing and re-evaluating to be certain it is the truth.

**at the perfect law, the law of liberty,**

The Holy Spirit used James to reveal that the gospel can also be called is “a perfect law of liberty.” Much was said in the New Covenant about the imperfections of the Old Law.

*For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 for the law made nothing perfect; Heb 7:18-19*

*For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. Heb 10:1*

*But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Rom 7:6*

We were delivered from the Old Covenant in which nothing could be made perfect and now serve God with the “perfect” law.

*“teleios,... brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect...*

*substantively, that which is perfect: of men, full-grown, adult; of full age, mature,... of mind and character, one who has reached the proper height of virtue and integrity...” (Thayer, p. 618).*

The problem with the Old Law centered on one basic issue. Our fleshly desires were so strong that we could not keep it. It was not a problem with the Law, but a a problem with our flesh. The new Covenant solved that by sending Jesus and bringing grace and forgiveness. Now we have a law we can keep because when we violate it, we can ask for forgiveness and keep on living under that Law:

*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Rom 8:3-5*

This is why in the same verse, it is called the law of “liberty.”

*eleutheria... liberty... in the N.T. a. liberty to do or to omit things having no relation to salvation...*

*freedom from the dominion of corrupt desires, so that we do by the free impulses of the soul what the will of God requires... the Christian religion, which furnaces that rule of right living by which the liberty just mentioned is attained... “ (Thayer, p. 204; 1657)*

*eleutheros, eleutheroo, eleutheria, apeleutheros ... to be free is to be at one's own disposal: ... 1. It was partly fashioned by contrast with the bondage of the slave. According to the general Gk. conviction defined in Aristotle ... the slave is the one who from the first (= by nature) does not belong to himself but to someone else. The formal sense of freedom naturally orientated itself to the political institution of the *doulos* More concretely the NT uses *eleutheria* for freedom from sin (Rom 6:18-23; John 8:31-36), from the Law (Rom 7:3; 8:2; Gal 2:4; 4:21-31; 5:1,13), and from death (Rom 6:21f.; 8:21). Freedom is freedom from an existence which in sin leads through the Law to death. ...” (Kittel, TDWNT; NT 1658)*

Since the idea of freedom is fraught with the peril of taking it too far, it is best to allow Jesus and His apostles to define exactly what the freedom is that this law of liberty offers. First, it is a freedom from sin. When we become His disciple, the truth revealed it the gospel is in fact the law of liberty that removes the bondage of sin and frees us by the grace and mercy of God.

*Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” 33 They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, ‘You will be made free?’” 34 Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. 36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. John 8:31-36*

The law of liberty keeps us from ever returning to bondage because we are not under law but under grace. Whenever we stumble into sin, we can extricate ourselves immediately by using godly sorrow and repentance, leading to confession of sins and we are completely free again. Sin can never take dominion unless we allow it.

*For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Rom 6:14*

*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. Rom 6:17-23*

*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Rom 8:1-3*

When looked at from the perspective of true freedom and liberty, we have been greatly blessed by God to have been given such an amazing and powerful opportunity to be made free. That's why we should be looking so intently into it. The next thing we hear may bring even more freedom to our lives that have been filled with bondage to ignorance and sin.

This is a law that sets free all those who follow it. Free from sin, free from superstition, free from false teaching and freedom from fear of death.

### **and abides by it,**

The man does something different from the one who looks in the mirror and turns away. This one never turns away. He "continues" in it:

*"parameno... to remain beside, continue always near... (and continues to do so, not departing till all stains are washed away..." (Thayer, p. 485; 3887)*

*"parameno "to continue," e. g. "to remain beside" (para, "beside"), "to continue near," came to signify simply "to continue," ..." (Vines NT:3887)*

We have all learned about *hupo-meno* which is to abide under persecutions and trials as endurance. This is *para-meno* which has all the power of the remaining but this time it is at the side of or beside. So the one who hears is always by the side of this law. They never move away from it. It is always right next to them, directing and guiding them away from bondage and into freedom. Leading them from imperfection and into perfection.

### **not having become a forgetful hearer**

With an aorist participle of *eime* which is the verb of being, James speaks of not allowing ourselves to become like this. We should not be able to look back into the past and see that this has ever occurred. We have never allowed ourselves to become someone who has heard something from God's word and then forgotten it. We are not forgetful hearers. We listen intently with the goal of keeping it ever present in our minds. Never do the things once learned slip away. There is an intensity here, a curiosity and desire born of the knowledge of salvation. Never will it be forgotten or neglected.

*"epilanthanomai... to forget... in the sense of neglecting, no longer caring for... forgotten, given over to oblivion, i.e. uncared for..." (Thayer, p. 240; 1950)*

### **but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.**

With the adversative conjunction (*alla*), James replaces what never should be with what should always be the case. He wants Christians to be working doers. Those who make and produce along with a product and something accomplished to show for it. He will return to this in the next chapter.

*"ergon... 1. business, employment, that with which anyone is occupied... 2. any product whatever, any thing accomplished by hand, art, industry, mind... 3. an act, deed, thing done: ..." (Thayer, p. 248; 2041)*

*poietes.... 1. a maker, producer, author (Xenophon, Plato, others). 2. a doer, performer ..." (Thayer's Greek Lexicon, NT4163)*

This is the great dividing line between Christians, between the true and the false, between the genuine and the counterfeit, between the deceived and the blessed. James will speak on this more in 2:14, faith without doing is dead. Work must be done, desire must lead to action.

### **26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious,**

James concludes this section with a possibility. If there is anyone reading this letter who things

he is a religious person, then James wants him to carefully consider whether he has the credentials for it to be true.

*“dokeo... 1. to be of opinion, think, suppose... 2. intrans. to seem, be accounted, reputed... 3. inpers. ... it seems to me; i.e. a. I think judge...”* (Thayer, , p. 154; 1380).

If anyone of us reading this letter has this judgment and opinion about ourselves, if they think and suppose, or if it seems to them that they are religious, then here are some things anyone can do to see if it is genuine religion or if we are only deceived. The term “religious” is a difficult word to define, but this passage seems to follow the same path as Paul took in Romans.

*Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, 18 and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, 19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. 21 **You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? 22 You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? 24 For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written. Rom 2:17-24***

Claiming to be a true servant requires more than a simple affirmation. In Romans, Paul spoke of moral purity and submission to God's commands. James asks about our religion, which appears to capture the same idea of that of Jew. Someone who fears and worships God and trembles at His word. Who seeks for ceremonial purity in worship following God's directions just like Abel.

*“threskos... fearing or worshipping God; religious (apparently fr. treo to tremble; hence prop. trembling, fearful...”* (Thayer, p. 292; 2357)

*threskeia* signifies "religion" in its external aspect (akin to *threskos*, see below), "religious worship," especially the ceremonial service of "religion"; it is used of the "religion" of the Jews, Acts 26:5; of the "worshipping" of angels, Col 2:18, which they themselves repudiate Rev 22:8,9; " (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, NT:2356)

we have in *threskos* (James 1:26), which still more nearly corresponds to the Latin 'religiosus,' the zealous and diligent performer of the divine offices, of the outward service of God. ... is predominantly the ceremonial service of religion, of her whom Lord Brooke has so grandly named 'mother of form and fear,'—the external framework or body, of which *eusebeia* is the informing soul. (Trench's Synonyms of the NT:2357)

If we believe we are true Christians following the ways of Scripture as closely as possible, there are other equally important things that must be sought and fulfilled.

### **and yet does not bridle his tongue**

First, is the matter of the words we allow to flow from our heart. Jesus Himself revealed that the tongue reveals the heart, because only what is first in the heart can flow out into words.

*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. Lk. 6:45*

An unbridled tongue reveals a heart that is not well ordered or properly prepared. Just like a horse that is unbridled goes where it will and does as it pleases so also the tongue of a man who is not properly trained.

*kalinagogeō ... from *chalinōs* and *ago*, "to lead," signifies "to lead by a bridle, to bridle, to hold in check, restrain"; it is used metaphorically of the tongue and of the body in James 1:26 and 3:2. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, NT:5468)*

Since James will return this and give an entire chapter to it, we can wait for his full explanation. There James will reveal that not only does the tongue need a bridle, but because it is a fire, and a world of iniquity among our members, it can defile the entire body and destroy any form of religion.

### **but deceives his own heart,**

Since the tongue is such a critical part of God's revelation of man, any religion that does not train us to bridle it, or anyone who has been deceived in any other way about the importance of bridling and being careful about our words is deceived about the value of his religion.

*Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things,*

and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Mt. 12:34-37

### **this man's religion is worthless.**

James doesn't hold back in any way. Any form of religion that doesn't train us to hold our tongue and be careful with its use is worthless and vain. It has no power and thus cannot bring success.

"mataios... devoid of force, truth, success, result [A. V. uniformly vain] ... useless, to no purpose.... ta mataia vain things, vanities, of heathen deities and their worship..." (Thayer, p. 392-393; 3152)

"mataios... pertaining to being useless on the basis of being futile and lacking in content - 'useless, futile, empty, futility.' (Lou and Nida, Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domain. NT:3152)

### **27 This is pure and undefiled religion**

James is not rejecting all the other aspects of "religion," only making sure that all understand that the gospel does not only teach reverence to God and Christ and to submit to the duties and obligations of the gospel, but it also teaches the importance of our relationship to our fellow-man. Jesus sought to teach this when He reminded Israel that there were actually two great laws.

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Matt 22:36-40

We must direct our hearts to God and love Him, but we must also direct ourselves toward our fellow-man. So pure religion is not simply moral purity and being right in all doctrinal matters. In order for it to be pure, it must also move in the direction of compassion and pity toward those who are poor and weak.

"katharos... clean, pure, (free from the admixture or adhesion of anything that soils, adulterates corrupts); a. physically... b. in a levitical sense; clean; i.e. the use of which is not forbidden, imparts no uncleanness... c. ethically; free from corrupt desire, from sin and guilt... free from every admixture of what is false, sincere... genuine blameless, innocent..." (Thayer, p. 312; 2513)

"amiantos... not defiled, unsoiled; free from that by which the nature of a thing is deformed and debased or its force and vigor impaired..." (Thayer, p. 32; 283)

### **in the sight of our God and Father,**

This concept was used by Paul to remind us that we are always walking in the sight of God and it is only in His eyes that religion has any value or merit. He is watching and He wants to see our attitude toward these things in order to find our worship acceptable.

### **to visit orphans and widows in their distress,**

The term visit has two important parts. It's primary meaning has two parts. The first is to look into and assess the needs. It has the same root as that of the overseer who watches over the congregation.

"episkeptomai ... "to inspect" (a late form of *episkopeo*, "to look upon, care for, exercise oversight"), signifies (a) "to visit" with help, ... (b) "to visit" the sick and afflicted, Matt 25:36,43; James 1:27; (c) "to go and see," "pay a visit to," Acts 7:23; 15:36; (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:1980)

"episkeptomai... to look upon or after, to inspect, examine with the eyes; a. *tina* in order to see how he is, i.e. to visit, go to see one... b. Hebraistically to look upon in order to help[ or to benefit, i.q. to look after, have a care for, provide for..." (Thayer, p. 242; 1980)

Equally important is the relieving of whatever needs are found. James will also return to this thought later in the book. There is no profit to visiting and even expressing a desire that the needs be fulfilled.

*If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Jas. 2:15-16*

Two groups are expressly mentioned. Both widows and orphans are terms stressing the loss of a provider. These are the helpless and defenseless. It has always been God's desire that these individuals be cared for. God had instructed all Israel to leave the gleanings of the field for them.

*"When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to*

get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. 21 When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. 22 And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing. Deut 24:19-22

God even explained that part of His condemnation of Sodom was in this matter. They did not care for the needy.

*Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; **neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.** 50 And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit. Ezek. 16:49-50*

This is one thing that our own country is to commended for doing. They have been very active in preparing for the needs of this groups of people. So much so that they have placed many Christians into an interesting dilemma. Since James speaks of distress, much of this has been removed at least in the financial realm. With all the insurances in existence, much of the financial distress has been removed.

*“thlipsis... properly, a pressing, pressing together, pressure... in bibl. and eccles. Greek metaph., oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, straits;... of the afflictions of those hard pressed by siege and the calamities of war,... of the straits of want,... of the distress of a woman in child-birth...”*  
(Thayer, p. 291; 2347).

Yet the command still stands. Pure religion requires that we at least check.

*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Gal. 6:10*

### **and to keep oneself unstained by the world.**

This one is the most expected. Everyone understands that in order to be considered right with God we must live an unstained life.

*“aspilos... metaph. free from censure, irreproachable,... free from vice, unsullied...”* (Thayer, p. 81; 784)

The meaning behind this term was fully explained by John.

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 2:15-17*

It is such a contradiction that the very place God created should contain such things, but so it is. The world misuses all the wonderful qualities God gave to be enjoyed and become such a blessing to us. Yet the lusts of flesh and eyes along with the pride of life have stained us all in some way or another. We must identify these stains and remove them one by one.