



TOPICAL LESSONS

BASED ON
THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Ron Adams

Lessons
from
James

TOPICAL STUDY

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NOTE TO STUDENTS

This topical study differs from a verse-by-verse study in that it groups verses that address a specific topic. By so doing each section is viewed as a whole, distinct from the other parts of the book, but not to the extent of divorcing it from the context of the complete book.

The goal of this booklet is to address subjects that are part of every day life for Christians.

– Ron Adams

THE TESTING OF OUR FAITH

JAMES 1:2-4

The trials suffered by Christians have always been met with the following questions: “Why does our all-powerful God allow such to happen? and “What good purpose can they serve? The matter needs to be settled in the Christian’s mind, and James (along with other New Testament writers) provides the answers.

TRIALS WILL COME

“And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” 2Ti.3:12

What kind of trials could be expected by the original recipients of this letter?

What kind of trials can we expect today in our country?

Should we be surprised at such trials? 1Pe.4:12-13

When called to “suffer as a Christian,” what should be our disposition? 1Pe.4:12-19

REJOICING IN TRIALS

Is “rejoicing” and “enjoying” synonymous?

Examples of rejoicing in trials can be found in Act.5:40-42 and 1Pe.1:6-9.

Properly handling trials ensures eternal glory. 2Ti.2:10-13

TRIALS SERVE A USEFUL PURPOSE

“. . . knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” Jam. 1:3-4

In Rom.5:3-5 what does tribulation bring?

Define “endurance.” (Note 1Pe.2:20)

What lessons are we to learn from Christ’s suffering? 1Pe.2:21-23

Comment on these sayings:

“Trials are the hammer blows which shape our character.”

“Gold is refined by fire.”

“Muscles are strengthened by strenuous activity.”

“Life is hard” is not an excuse for quitting, but the reason for persevering.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Is it possible for a Christian to suffer for reasons other than “as a Christian”? If so, what other reasons?
- Is there a difference between “trials” and “temptations”?
- Is it necessary to endure in order to be perfect (mature) and complete? Why?

PRAYING FOR WISDOM

JAMES 1:5-8

While we may accept the teaching that trials result in our being “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing, we may be plagued with questions and misgivings while undergoing the testing (before perseverance has produced it’s result). Thus we have a need for wisdom from above.

SOME MAY LACK WISDOM

“But if any of you lacks wisdom . . .”

Wisdom whereby one may “count it all joy when you fall into various temptations,” and “let patience have her perfect work.”

‘ASK OF GOD’

Seek wisdom from above. Jam.3:17

Don’t rely on “worldly wisdom” Jam.3:13-16

Pursue wisdom (and understanding). Pro.2:1-12

Note the value of such wisdom. Pro.4:5-9

Note the purpose of proverbs. Pro.1:2-4

Ask God in confidence. 1Jo.5:14-15

Recognize the need for wisdom.

See God as a generous giver.

Are there any barriers that would prevent God from giving such wisdom? What are they?

ASK IN FAITH

“Without any doubting,” confident that God will answer.

A doubter is compared with “the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”

Was the father mentioned in Mar.9:14-24 a double-minded man? If so, why?

Does Peter (2Pe.3:3-4) give an example of people being double-minded. Explain your answer.

Does 1Ki.18:20-21 say the Israelites were double-minded? How were they?

Is 1Ch.12:33 an example of being double-minded?

“Being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

Does being double-minded affect all aspects of living? If yes, explain.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Why is faith (implicit trust) a requisite for effective prayer?
- Why can’t a man, who vacillates between cheerful confidence and dark doubt “receive anything from the Lord”?
- The phrase “ask of God” indicates that repeated requests are to be made. What does this imply?

EQUALITY IN CHRIST

JAMES 1:9-11

It is evident that we all enter life under different circumstances, endowed with abilities that vary in degree and nature, and are afforded different opportunities. We all pursue life with varying degrees of determination. In this world some become powerful, influential or rich, while others do not. But when we are “born again” all such distinctions have no bearing on our spiritual life in the kingdom of God.

THE POSITION OF THE RICH

Wealth can be a powerful tool in the affairs of this life.

Such power can be abused and misused. Pro.18:23, 22:16, Luk.16:19ff

Wealth can cause one to feel self-sufficient.

The rich farmer is a prime example. Luk.12:16ff

Wealth can make one wise in his own eyes. Pro.28:11, Jer.9:23

Is it wrong to be rich?

Why is it “hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven?” Mat.19:23

What is meant by “the deceitfulness of riches in Mat.13:22?”

What instructions are given to rich disciples? 1Ti.6:17-19

Is “money the root of all evil? 1Ti.6:9 (cf. Luk.18:23ff)

Can an inordinate desire for riches ruin one’s life? Pro.28:20,22

THE POSITION OF THE POOR

The poor are at the mercy of the rich and powerful.

The poor are humbled by poverty and a low station in life.

The poor must not despise the rich, or see all those who are rich as evil.

They have something in common with the rich. Pro.22:2

EQUALITY IN CHRIST

Poor exalted, rich humbled.

Rich may be rich still, and the poor may be poor still, but they share equally in a common calling and in a common salvation.

Trials erase any distinction.

When the poor suffer, they do so in the elevated position of “a child of God.”

When the rich suffer, they do so in the humble position of “a child of God.”

What elevates the poor, humbles the rich. Jam.1:9-10

Time and death erase all distinctions. Rev.20:12

Riches are for this life only. 1Ti.6:7

How much did the rich man leave when he died?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Can you name some rich followers of Jesus?
- What lessons do we learn from the rich man’s refusal to sell all he had and give to the poor?
- Discuss the condition of the church in Laodicea (Rev.3:17) and in Smyrna (Rev.2:9).
- What greater responsibilities do rich members have?
- Cite some examples of the “deceitfulness of riches” choking one’s spiritual life.

TEMPTATION

JAMES 1:12-18

Temptations* are part of life. We all experience them at various times. Is God the source of temptations? If not God, then where do they come from, and why do they come? James gives us the answers.

GOD IS NOT THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATIONS

God cannot be tempted, nor does he tempt anyone. Jam.2:13

Being holy, He has no desire that can be exploited, no weakness which can be assailed; and he has no reason to tempt man.

He only gives good and perfect gifts. Jam.1:17

Whatever He gives is beneficial; never detrimental.

With Him there is no variation or changing. Heb.6:13-18

He brought us forth to be His creation: Why destroy what was created "good"?

To entice us to do evil would be inconsistent with His character and His expressed purpose.

THE TRUE SOURCE OF TEMPTATION

It is not any external object or person.

It comes from within. Jam.1:14-15 (note "his own" in verse 14)

When carried away (drawn by own desires)

Then enticed by what is offered or promised. (Similar to an animal being drawn into a snare by the use of bait.)

The process: [conception] lust, [birth] sin comes to life, [maturity] sin develops, [death] sin results in spiritual death.

EXAMPLES OF TEMPTATION GIVING BIRTH TO SIN

Adam and Eve. Gen.3:1-6

Judas. Joh.12:6, Luk.22:1-6

Simon. Act.8:14-24

Ananias and Sapphira. Act.5:1ff

HANDLING TEMPTATION

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." 1Co.10:12

Don't be deceived.

What do the following verses have in common?

1Co.6:18 1Co.10:14 1Ti.6:11 2Ti.2:22

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- What should one do if lust gives birth to sin?
- God told Abraham to offer up his son (Gen.22). Does this command to destroy one's only son contradict what James says?
- What are the consequences of sin?

* tempt=used here means "to assail with enticements."

Cf. Mat.4:1-11 and 2Pe.2:18

THE CHRISTIAN AND ANGER

JAMES 1:19-20

Anger is an emotion aroused by a sense of injury or wrong. All of us are familiar with the “heat of an argument or debate. How should a Christian view such an emotion? Is it wrong to be angry? Let’s look at what the Bible says.

THE RECEPTION OF ‘THE WORD OF TRUTH’

Quick to hear.

The reception of the Word demands a readiness to listen.

Slow to speak.

Restrained speech is also demanded so that one may hear and receive instruction.

Slow to anger.

Anger closes the mind. It creates an atmosphere wherein righteousness cannot flourish.

A GENERAL PRINCIPLE IS INVOLVED

We must always consider ourselves learners (disciples) and not “masters” who know it all.

We must carefully consider the message and the impact of what we are about to say.

“He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.” Pro.18:13

We must be slow to anger.

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.” Pro.16:32

ANGER

Is it wrong to be angry? Note Eph.4:26

“Don’t let the sun go down on your anger.” Why Not?”

Four actions associated with anger. Eph.4:31

Bitterness, Wrath, Clamor, Slander

These are what Christians are to put aside. Col.3:8

“Anger” and “wrath” in the New Testament denote two actions:

θυμος thumos: a sudden outburst (active emotion).

οργη orge: a settled and abiding condition (inward feeling).

“Not soon angry” Tit.1:7 refers to one prone to anger.

One is to be slow to anger when wronged or opposed. 2Ti.2:24-26

EXAMPLES OF ANGER BLOCKING ACCEPTANCE

Naaman’s anger (at first). 2Ki.5:9-12

Scribes and Pharisees filled with rage. Luk.6:6-11

Jews angered by what Stephen said. Act.7:51-54

The older brother’s deep seated wrath. Luk.15:28

FOR DISCUSSION

- What value is there in “counting to 10”?
- “Charah” in Hebrew means “to burn, be heated.” Note it’s use in Jon.4:1,4,9
- What are the implications of “the tongue is a fire.” Jam.3:6
- Other words associated with anger are: resentment, wrath, indignation, rage and fury.

NOT HEARERS ONLY

JAMES 1:21-27

Being “swift to hear the Word (verses 19-20) is important. But how we receive it is of great importance. James tells us how to, and how not to, receive it.

PREPARATION FOR RECEIVING THE WORD

Put aside all filthiness (dirt, filth; metaphorically: moral defilement).

Put aside all that remains of wickedness (evil, naughtiness, malice).

Alternate reading: “abundance of malice.”

Humility required to receive the word. (Received in an unassuming manner.)

The Word is not to be mixed with one’s own beliefs, but it is to be received intact and undiluted.

LISTENING IS NOT ENOUGH

One must prove himself a “doer of the word.”

It’s possible for a person to delude themselves in this matter.

Hearing and receiving the word (without subsequent action) is incomplete.

Salvation is predicated upon one replacing the “former manner of life.”

EFFECTUAL DOERS

“Look intently.” Not a hasty glance, but a deliberate, careful gaze.

Examples: Pharisees (Luk.6:6ff), a disciple (Joh.20:5), Paul (Act.23:1), Jews in Berea, (Act.17:11).

“Abide by it.” Continues in it. Note Psa. 1.

“Do what it says” is the heart of this passage.

All believers are enjoined to abide in the word. Joh.8:31-32, Col.3:16-17

“Does not forget.”

The word is to be kept active in the mind, not filed away in the recesses.

“Blessed in what he does.” Religion put into action.

WORTHLESS RELIGION

Religion that promotes zealous and diligent hearing but is lax in application.

Religion that demands strict observance of ritual, but avoids daily application.

Religion that does not bridle the tongue.

A religion of osmosis: taking credit for what the group does without personal involvement.

PURE RELIGION

A life changed and controlled by the Word received.

A life of personal involvement. Note Mat.25:34-36

A life that is unstained by the world (not blemished by sin that is in the world).

Note 1Pe.1:14-16, 2Pe.3:14

FOR DISCUSSION

- Why does an “unbridled tongue” render one’s religion worthless?
- What does “the word implanted” suggest?
- Who are some of the forgetful hearers mentioned in the Bible?

FAVORITISM AND PARTIALITY

JAMES 2:1-13

Favoritism and partiality based on appearance and wealth conflicts with one's sense of fairness. Likewise, discrimination based on outward appearances is in direct conflict with one's faith in our impartial Lord Jesus Christ. This tendency toward favoritism has always been found in society, but it must be kept out of the church.

THE TEXT

An expressed command is given. (:1)
An example is cited. (:2-3)
An obvious conclusion is stated. (:4)
A group of rhetorical questions are posed. (:5-7)
The "royal law" is mentioned. (:8)
All commandments are important and need to be observed. (:9-11)
The admonition. (:12-13)

THE COMMAND

"Do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism."
Showing favoritism violates the royal law: the law of our king.
Partial obedience renders one totally guilty.
"Love thy neighbor" sums up the entire law regarding our fellow man.
Violating any one aspect of it, violates the total concept.
Mercy and favor bestowed on others is to be extended to all without partiality.
As our Lord did. Rom. 10:12, Col. 3:11

WHY FAVORITISM IS NOT TO BE SHOWN

Social and moral reasons for not showing favoritism. (:6-7)
It's immoral to show favoritism to those who "oppress the poor and blaspheme the fair name."
"Social snobbery is superficial and misplaced." (Anonymous quotation)
Religious reasons for refraining from showing favoritism. (:9-10)
It's a violation of the royal law. It is sin.
Favoritism is based on evil motives. (:4)
It's often done to gain an advantage. Note Jde. 16

FOR DISCUSSION

- Is every poor Christian "rich in faith?"
- What are some other worldly reasons for showing partiality?
- What lesson on mercy is taught in the parable found in Mat. 18:23-35?
- What is meant by the "perfect law of liberty?"

DEAD FAITH VS. WORKING FAITH

JAMES 2:14-26

Professions of faith, that are mere professions, are useless and vain. Such may produce a sense of well-being, but are powerless to effect one's eternal salvation. A saving faith produces works. When one's faith does not produce works then that faith is useless, empty and dead.

THE TEXT

The proposition. (:14-17)

Three questions: "What use is it?" "if someone says he has faith but he has no works; can that faith save him?" "What use is that?"

The argument. (:18-25)

Belief that 'faith' and 'works' are not necessarily related is challenged.

Believing 'God is one' is shown to be insufficient.

Faith without works is useless.

Examples cited to bolster argument.

The conclusion. (:26)

PROFESSION ONLY VS. ACTIVE PRINCIPLE

Profession:

What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? :14

And one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? :16

But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." :18

Active principle:

"faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected" :22

Active principle exemplified:

Abraham, the perfect role model for the Jews.

Rahab, an example of a non-Jew's "working faith."

Faith without works is useless (:16), dead (:17,26)

Faith that does not produce action is superficial. Mat.23:25-28

Faith is to purify the heart, change the will, revitalize one's life!

FOR DISCUSSION

- Faith must produce more than "church life." It must activate family prayer, instruction of children, devotion of thought, time and effort to personal growth.
- Discuss the use of Rahab, the harlot, as an example.
- Does James contradict "not of works" in Eph.2:8-9?
- Does "justified by faith, not by works" in Rom.4:1-4 contradict what James writes?
- Is there a possible connection between James 3:1 and verses 14, 16, 18 in chapter 2?
- Life is dynamic (we are actively doing something), and the Christian's faith is to control the dynamics of life in order to produce good works.
- "What we believe concerning life is established by what we do."

THE TEACHER'S BURDEN

JAMES 3:1-2

The desire to be a teacher of the Word is a most worthy one. But the desire, of necessity, must be tempered by a realization of the responsibilities incurred. Indeed, the responsibilities should cause all to carefully consider the teacher's burden.

'INCUR A STRICTER JUDGMENT'

Other translations: "greater condemnation" (KJ), "greater strictness" (RSV, NEB, NIV).

The position of the teacher should not be sought out of a desire for prominence; nor should it be sought so one would be able to rashly and arrogantly admonish and reprove others.

The teacher is responsible not only for his own beliefs, but for the beliefs he instills in the minds of the students.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Must be one who loves the truth. Pro.23:23

Must be an example of what is taught. 2Ti.2:15

Teachings and actions must agree. 1Ti.4:12, 6:11-14; Rom.2:19-23

Must have ability (gift) to teach. Rom.12:6-8

Not all who desire to teach are capable of becoming teachers.

Not all who gain great Bible knowledge have the skill to instruct others effectively.

TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES

Know what is to be taught.

Diligent study is required. 1Ti.4:13-16

Must continue to grow in knowledge. 2Pe.3:18

Know how to teach. 2Ti.2:22-26

Refuse foolish questions; not to be quarrelsome.

To be kind to all, patient when wronged.

Gentle in instruction; knowing the goal of instruction.

Be aware of the student's present level of knowledge.

"Teach students, not lessons."

Be familiar with various methods of teaching.

Pay close attention to himself. 1Ti.4:16

FOR DISCUSSION

- Discuss "The Seven Laws of Teaching."
- What general characteristics are necessary to be a Bible class teacher?
- How can a Bible teacher begin his instruction on the current level of his students, when the members are at different stages of development?
- Should a member be given a teaching position in order to have him attend class regularly?
- Comment on this statement: "The church ought to have teachers and classes that will benefit the students, giving them something of value in exchange for the time they have invested."

THE FIERY TONGUE

JAMES 3:2-12

The tongue is only a small part of the body, but it is harder to control than all the other parts. When it is not controlled, it can cause great damage and destruction. Thus it is imperative that Christians work to control the tongue.

SMALL BUT POWERFUL

The bit in a horse's mouth and the rudder of a ship exert a powerful influence; so also does the tongue.

Note the comparisons in the text:

A small bit controls a large animal.

A small rudder controls a large ship.

A small fire sets a large forest on fire.

A small tongue affects "the course of our life."

For good or evil, the tongue has great power.

An inflammatory tongue turns brother against brother, man against man, nation against nation.

Such destructive "fire" has its source in Ghenna (hell).

SMALL BUT CANNOT BE TAMED

All manner of creatures have been tamed, but not the tongue. It can never be "domesticated."

It is a "restless evil." Note 1Pe.5:8

It's "full of deadly poison." Note Rom.3:13

SMALL BUT MUST BE UNDER CONSTANT CONTROL

A restless tongue blesses God, yet curses men (created in His image.)

This is as inconsistent as a fountain bringing forth sweet and bitter water.

It's as incredulous as a fig tree producing olives; a vine producing figs. Note 1Jo.3:7-10

This letter is addressed to "my brethren" (3:12); therefore the problem is one that must be dealt with by all Christians.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Who controls the bit? Who controls the rudder? Who is to control the tongue?
- Discuss the thought (3:2): "If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well."
- Is there ever a time when the tongue can be allowed to "roam free?" Why not?
- Make a list of things to be considered before speaking.
- All disciples are constrained to cultivate the habit of speaking gently and carefully.
- Read and comment on these passages: Eph.5:4, Col.4:6, Pro.25:11, Psa.52:2-3, 57:4

EARTHLY WISDOM VS. HEAVENLY WISDOM

JAMES 3:13-18

Ambition and zeal are two qualities that can be used to achieve both good and evil ends. Thus zeal and ambition must be properly directed to be beneficial. This is especially true in regards to members of the church. These two qualities must be directed by heavenly wisdom, not earthly wisdom.

WISE TEACHERS

“Wise” was a technical term used in reference to the teacher, scribe and rabbi (those skilled in their profession).

True “wise ones” demonstrate their wisdom in their daily living. Note Rom.2:17-21

These verses are not concerned with what one teaches, but how one lives.

One’s behavior is to be good and gentle.

“But if you have...” (3:14) indicates the possibility of some members having selfish ambitions.

EARTHLY WISDOM

Wisdom (in this instance) is used accommodatingly. It’s actually pseudo-wisdom.

The nature of such wisdom is “earthly, natural, demonic.”

HEAVEN WISDOM

First, it is pure (hagnos), pure from defilement, not contaminated, holy.

The manifestations of heavenly wisdom are “peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.”

FOR DISCUSSION

- What are some results of earthly wisdom being followed?
- What are some results of heavenly wisdom being applied?
- Discuss the phrase “knowledge makes arrogant” in 1Co.8:1.
- Notice the earthly wisdom of the Pharisees and scribes that was condemned by Jesus in Mat.23:4, 6-7, 15, 23, 27-28.
- When the peace of a congregation is disturbed by members being directed by earthly wisdom, what attitudes and characteristics are evident?
- Define these words found in the text:

gentle	natural	demonic
arrogant	disorder	jealousy

THE SOURCE OF QUARRELS

JAMES 4:1-12

Having spoken of “those who make peace (3:18), the writer now turns our attention to those who produce quarrels and conflicts among members. The cause and solution are both presented.

THE TEXT

Worldly wisdom manifested. (:1-3)
Spiritual unfaithfulness is the result. (:4-6)
Exhortation to faithfulness. (:7-10)
Judging one another is to stop. (:11-12)

THE PROBLEM

“Lust...do not have...commit murder.” Note 1Pe.2:11
Hatred and murder equated. 1Jo.3:15, Mat.5:21-22
“Envious...cannot obtain...fight and quarrel.” Note Jam.3:14
“Ask not...do not have; ask amiss...do not receive.” Note “spend” in Luk.15:14
The problem summed up:
Motivated by personal pleasures
Guided by earthly wisdom
Use of force to obtain, rather than using prayer
Misuse of prayer (evil intent)
Self-centeredness is detected in “lust, envy, cannot obtain, don’t have, don’t receive.”

THE RESULT

Spiritual unfaithfulness, divided affection is the result of such quarrels.
“Adulteresses,” is a strong indictment intended to wake up the guilty.
Note Old Testament use of the term in Jeremiah 31:32, and in the book of Hosea.
Jesus used the words “evil and adulterous generation.” Mat.12:39
Paul also speaks of spiritual infidelity. 2Co.11:2
James says friendship with the world is spiritual adultery. Jam.4:4
John, in writing to the church at Thyatira, mentions adultery. Rev.2:18-22

THE SOLUTION

Submit to God, resist the devil (renew obedience).
Draw near to God (strengthen relationship).
Cleanse hands, purify hearts (change thinking and actions)
Be miserable, mourn and weep (contrition).
Humble self (submission).
Cease from judging others.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Define the word “lust.”
- What are some common lusts found among mankind (other than sensual)?
- According to 1Jo.3:15, is hatred an “embryonic form” of murder?
- Do the principles of quarrels and conflicts have a universal application? In what way?
- What’s wrong with gratifying self at the expense of others?
- Do the principles herein have application to those desiring to be teachers? Note 2Ti.2:23, Tit.3:9

INCLUDING GOD IN YOUR PLANS

JAMES 4:13-17

Another manifestation of “worldly wisdom is presumptuous self-reliance—the forming of plans as if one had control over the future. Such arrogance leaves no room for the will of God. It is not wisdom. It is utter foolishness.

ARROGANT SELF-SUFFICIENCY

It is forming plans as if life and vitality will certainly continue as planned.

“Shall go...spend year...make a profit.”

An example of such arrogance is found in Luk.12:13-21.

Paul chides the Jews for their boasting in Rom.2:17,23.

With such arrogance one presumes to be above God’s will: “boast in your arrogance” :16

It causes one to overlook our dependency upon God for life and vitality.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF TOMORROW

It’s not so much that tomorrow may not come, but what will “your life” be tomorrow? :14

Will you be healthy or sick? Whole or crippled? Whole or harmed by another?

The frailty of life is a fact not to be ignored.

Our knowledge is limited and life is uncertain.

We cannot penetrate the future, that’s in God’s hands.

“You are just a vapor” (:14) is a shocking reminder of the brevity of life.

“Remember that my life is but breath...” Job.7:7

“Thus He remembered that they were but flesh...” Psa.78:39

IF THE LORD WILLS

“Man proposes, God disposes.”

The Apostle Paul said, “if the Lord (or God) wills.” Act.18:21, 1Co.4:19

In the end, all of man’s plans are subject to being superseded by the will of God.

THE SIN OF OMISSION

Knowing what ought to be done obligates one to do it.

A+O=R (Ability plus Opportunity equals Responsibility)

Example of “falling short.”

The one-talent servant failed to perform. Mat.25:14ff

At the judgment, individuals will be condemned for doing nothing. Mat.25:41-43

The rich man failed to help Lazarus. Luk.16:19ff

Ceasing to do evil is only part of the equation: doing good is the other part.

“I never did evil or harm to another human being,” falls short of the Lord’s will.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Is it wrong to make plans? How about making long-range plans?
- Compare verse 17 with Rom.14:23. Do they teach the same thing?
- The “sin of omission” refers back to the previous text. Could it also look forward to chapter 5, verses 1 through 6?
- An interesting variation on what was being condemned: Maybe they presumptuously felt that God would aid them in their plans to gain wealth.

MISUSED WEALTH

JAMES 5:1-6

The “right thing to do (4:17) is to deal fairly and honestly with others. But some have become rich “on the backs of others, and then misuse their wealth. Such individuals do not escape God’s notice, nor do they escape His judgment.

FOUR SINS COMMITTED BY THE RICH

First: The hoarding of wealth.

Riches consisted of money, commodities and clothing. Note 2Ki.5:5,22; Luk.12:16-21

Second: Not paying others what they had earned. Note Deu.24:14-15

Third: Living in luxury and self-indulgence, at the expense of others.

Fourth: Murdering of the righteous (innocent).

They enjoyed what was done for them, but were unconcerned about what was done (or not done) for others.

SUCH OFFENDERS WILL BE PUNISHED

“Weep and howl.” Together these words form a descriptive word in Hebrew: “ol-ol-uz-o.”

Their unused and rotting riches are a witness against them.

They do not escape the judgment of the “Lord of hosts.”

Judgment is certain and will be sudden (unexpected).

As among the people of Noah’s day. Mat.24:37-39

As with Belshazzar in Daniel 5.

As with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.

THOUGHTS FOR DISCUSSION

- The right thing to do is to help, not oppress, the poor. Note Deu.15:7-11, Pro.14:31, 21:3
- In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man had no compassion. Luk.16:19ff
Note the setting of the parable. Luk.16:14
- Those who are wealthy are to be rich in good works. 1Ti.6:17-19
- Those who gain riches by abusing others, or misuse their wealth should fear the wrath of God. Isa.2:12
- Note the folly of trusting in riches in Psa.49.
- “...not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” Luk.12:15
- Does the text refer to abuses committed by Christians or abuses committed against Christians?
- “Coming upon you (prophetic perfect tense: i.e., they are coming and you will not escape).
- If history is correct, James was one of the righteous who was murdered.
- References to “the rich” are also found in 1:10-11, and 2:6.
- The problem of rich men oppressing others has been an ongoing problem throughout all generations and in all the world.
- The passage:
Teaches us of the folly of envying the lot of the rich.
Imparts consolation to all who suffer at the hands of oppressive men.
Gives courage and strength to handle such oppression.

PATIENCE

JAMES 5:7-11

Patience is a quality that needs to be developed by all true believers. It is the ability to bear up under the troubles and trials of life without complaint and without retaliation. Thus endurance and perseverance are part of patience.

THE EXHORTATION: BE PATIENT!

It's a matter of "abiding under." It's not seeking revenge or retaliating. (5:6)

It's the product of one's mind and will. One determines to be patient.

The result is of primary concern. By keeping one's eye focused on the result, one can bear up under "temporary" discomforts." Note 2Co.4:16-18

EXAMPLES OF PATIENCE

The farmer who waits for the early and late rains.

He has no control over the weather.

The prophets who suffered patiently.

They had no control over the people's reaction to God's message spoken by them.

They were mistreated and killed. Mat 23:37, Luk.6:22-23, Act.7:52

Jeremiah was beaten (Jer.20:2), imprisoned (Jer.32:2), and thrown into a pit. (Jer.38:6).

Job who endured much suffering.

He was tempted and torn by forces beyond his control, but he maintained his integrity. Job. 1:21-22; 2:10; 13:15; 19:25-27

THE RESULT

The farmer's patience resulted in a harvest.

The prophet's patience resulted in "blessedness" (5:11). Note Heb.11:32-39a

Job's patience resulted in "twice as much." Job.42:10-17

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. He "feels for us." Heb.4:14-16

As a result one profits from being patient.

THOUGHTS FOR DISCUSSION

- Discuss the meaning of: "patience," "endurance," "forbearance," "submission," "resignation."
- The farmer waits with expectation (faith) of it raining, but he also sows seed in preparation for the rain. What lessons do we learn from his activity?
- What does "the coming of the Lord" refer to here? What does it refer to in Isa.13:6? In Mat.24:27? And in 1Th.5:23?
- "Complain" (murmur) refers to "smothered resentment and "unexpressed bitterness."
Friction among members demands more patience, than abuse and attacks by outsiders.
It takes more patience to endure a constant dripping than to handle a momentary flood.
- The testimony of Scripture is given for our learning. Note 1Co.10:11-13
"Heard" of endurance, "seen" result.

OATHS

JAMES 5:12

The admonition to avoid swearing oaths reflects the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. The light and casual use of oaths in conversation would be in direct opposition to the longsuffering and patience mentioned in the previous verses.

OATHS

Oaths are designed to established the truthfulness and trust-worthiness of a statement. Note Heb.6:16
Some examples of oaths:

Abraham made an agreement with Abimelech, sealing it with an oath. Gen.21:24

David swore to King Saul. 1Sa.24:22

Paul called on God as a witness. 2Co.1:23, Gal.1:20

An angel swore an oath to John. Rev.10:5-6

God has made oaths. Heb.3:11, 6:17; Psa.95:11, 110:4

Oaths also have become a ruse to cover lying and deceit.

Jews swore falsely, thereby profaning the name of God. Lev.19:12, Isa.48:1

Peter swore to confirm his false denial. Mar.14:71

The Jews made a subtle and deceitful distinction between swearing “by the temple” and “by the gold of the temple.” Mat.23:16-22

WHAT IS PROHIBITED

Profanity (making common what is holy) is forbidden, for it desecrates and defiles. Exo.20:7

Rash and vain swearing is to be omitted. A truthful “yes” or “no” is sufficient.

Oaths to confirm casual statement are to be avoided. Mat.5:33-37

The casual use of “God,” “Jesus,” “Christ,” etc., to enhance statements is wrong.

Cursing (seeking to invoke evil on another).

The use of “hell,” “damnation,” etc. is prohibited.

THOUGHTS FOR DISCUSSION

- When swearing and profanity is commonplace, is it easy to pick up?
- What about “four-letter-words” used to shock one’s sensibility?
- Was Peter’s cursing and swearing a common way of attempting to deceive? It is today?
- Those who have no deep-seated fear (reverence) for God freely embellish their speech with profanity and oaths.
- Comment on this statement: “Most swearing is done casually and without much thought.”
- Is making an oath in civil court prohibited?
- If one can control the tongue, he can control his whole body (and life).
- It seems that most of us need words whereby we can make strong exclamations. So we need to choose acceptable ones, and make a habit of using them.

SINGING AND PRAYING

JAMES 5:13-18

In whatever circumstances we may find ourselves, it is good to direct our attention to the Lord. Be it an occasion of suffering persecution, a time of good fortune, or an occasion of being sick, it is good to commune with the Lord in prayer or song. Such actions revive and refresh the spirit.

THE TEXT

Is any suffering? Let him pray.
Is any cheerful? Let him sing praises.
Is any sick? Let him call the elders. (Prayer over him, and the anointing with oil.)
Confess sins to one another; pray for one another.
The effectiveness of a righteous man's prayer. Elijah is cited as an example.

SINGING WHEN CHEERFUL

"... filled with the Spirit ... singing ..." Eph.5:18-20
"... singing with thankfulness ..." Col.3:16
Examples of songs of praise in the Bible:
Moses and the Israelites. Exo.14:30-15:21
Deborah and Barak. Jdg.5:1ff
Book of Psalms. At least fifteen references.
Paul and Silas. Act.16:25
Hosts in heaven. Rev.5:9-10, 15:3-4

PRAYING WHEN AFFLICTED

Prayer is proper when one is suffering trials.
David prayed concerning his affliction. Psa.86:1, 102:1
Paul prayed about his "thorn in the flesh." 2Co.12:8-10
Paul and Silas prayed while in prison.
Prayer is good when one is sick. Psa.35:13
The power of medicine should also be used to alleviate symptoms. Oil was considered an effective medicine. Isa.1:6, Luk.10:34

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Prayer on behalf of those sick.
Prayer on behalf of those afflicted.
The church prayed for Peter when he was imprisoned. Act.12:5,12
Prayer on behalf of brethren who have erred. Act.8:24, 1Jo.5:16
Prayer on behalf of brethren. Eph.6:18-19, 2Co.1:11
Prayer on behalf of rulers. 1Ti.2:1-2

THOUGHT FOR DISCUSSION

- The sick can pray for relief from pain, calmness of spirit, effectiveness of medicine, strength to endure, forgiveness of past sins.
- Discuss the statement: "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours."
- Discuss the activity of "confessing your sins to one another."
- Can there be a connection between sin and sickness? Isa.1:4-6, Act.12:23, 1Co.11:29-30

TURNING BACK THE STRAYING

JAMES 5:19-20

There is to be a feeling of mutual concern among the followers of Jesus Christ, especially among those who work and worship together in a local church. When a member of that church strays from the truth, the other members should be concerned enough to make an effort to turn him or her back to the truth.

THE TEXT

“Any among you” refers to those we know and with whom we associate in the local church.

“Strays from the truth” infers that one can stray from the truth in doctrine and or conduct.

Digression in doctrine. Note Gal.1:6-9, 1Ti.6:3-5, Tit.1:9-11

Deviation in conduct. Note Gal.5:19-21, Jde.4,16

Names of some individuals who strayed from the truth:

Hymenaeus and Alexander 1Ti.1:19-20; Hymenaeus and Philetus 2Ti.2:14-18

“Turn back [to the truth]”

Members can stray from the truth and so lose their spirituality. Truth saves only if one embraces it again (true repentance).

“Save a soul from death” i.e., spiritual death. Note Rom.6:16,23

“Cover a multitude of sins.”

The phrase is also found in the Old Testament. Psa.32:1, 85:2

The phrase is made clear in Rom.4:7-8

HOW ONE IS TURNED BACK TO THE TRUTH

By reproof (convicting one of his error; showing his actions are inconsistent with truth).

By rebuke (charging the brother or sister with wrong-doing; inferring that the guilty knows such is wrong and if it is not corrected will suffer punishment).

By exhortation (encouraging the guilty to forsake their error).

This is to be done with great patience. 2Ti.4:2

WHAT IS TO BE DONE WHEN ONE RETURNS

Forgive. Note Eph.4:32. Forgiveness must come from the heart. Mat.18:35

Accept brother or sister. 2Co.2:5-11

Don't continue to remind the recovered member of what he or she did. Note Pro.17:9

“... love covers all transgressions.” Pro.10:12

“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.” 1Pe.4:8

THOUGHTS FOR DISCUSSION

- How often must we forgive a penitent brother or sister? Note Mat.18:21-35
- What should our attitude be towards those who haven't turned back from their straying?
Note Gal.6:1, Jde.22-23, 2Pe.3:9
- What are some methods that should not be used in trying to restore a straying member?
- What can happen if a penitent member is not accepted back into the number?
- What is the goal of all discipline?
- What was the purpose of “delivering [a brother] unto Satan” in 1Co.5:5?
- What was the goal of Paul rebuking Peter? Gal.2:11