

LEE BROWN'S NOTES ON THE BIBLE: JAMES

JAMES, CHAPTER 1

JAMES 1:1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

1. James was the half-brother of Jesus, a leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13ff; 21:18). He was sometimes called James the Just. The Greek name *James* is equivalent to the Hebrew name *Jacob*.
2. Chiastic structure of opening. The order in the original Greek of the first words ("James, of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, a slave") has an AB:B'A' structure.
 - A. James
 - B. of God
 - B' of Lord Jesus Christ
 - A' slave
3. bond-servant [G1401, *doulos*: "slave"]. This term does not have some of the negative connotations we have in an American culture. For example, James has chosen to be a slave, following an OT example of the love-slave (Ex 21:2-6, Dt 15:12-17). Some important truths follow from this choice.
 - a. Humility. James has deliberately humbled himself before Jesus as his Lord and at the same time exalting Him.
 - b. Loyalty. The Hebrew word for slave [*ebed*] has a rich OT history. In fact, *ebed YHWH* [Servant/Slave of YHWH] is the name of the suffering Servant of Isaiah (usually expressed as "My Servant") -- fulfilled by Jesus. The love slave is loyal.
 - c. An office. But equally important is that a slave never speaks for himself. The slave says what his master wants him to say. So James here holds an office. He speaks for God and for Jesus.
 - d. Slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. How can a slave have two masters? He cannot. This chiastic arrangement (AB-B'A') shows that James considered them to be One (cf. John 5:17; 9:4; 17:4).
4. Lord Jesus Christ. Most often in the Bible, when a writer uses the full title, it is a confessional statement - a full faith response. We must acknowledge [affirm] the truth that Jesus is the Christ [Hebrew: Messiah meaning *anointed*], the one anointed of God to fulfill God's plan for salvation. The Gospel message is true. Jesus [Hebrew: Joshua, meaning *God saves*] must be trusted as our Savior. Jesus must be obeyed as our Lord.

MIND	HEART	WILL	
Elements of Faith	Affirming	Trusting	Obeying
Faith in Jesus	Christ	Jesus/Savior	Lord

5. Twelve tribes. A designation for Jews. The rabbis of that day considered the Palestinian Jews as representing all twelve tribes. It does not mean that all twelve are being addressed by James. But James saw the church as the true Israel (cf. Jer 3:18; Ezk 37:19-24; Rom 4; 1 Cor 10:18; Gal 4:21-31; Phil 3:3).
6. dispersed abroad. A technical term for the Jews of the Dispersion of the Jews (*en te diaspora*). Perhaps there is a double meaning here. Jesus will gather all someday. He will fulfill all the prophecies of restoration in the OT. Christianity is not a new religion but the consummation of the old.
7. Greetings [G5463, *chairein*: "joy be to you"]. James uses a normal *Greek* greeting. It is quite a surprise that James does not use *Peace* -- the normal *Jewish* greeting. Nor does he use *Grace and Peace* as Paul does. Why? He wants to tie the greeting with the joy that follows in the next verse: [G5479, *chara*: joy] a word derived from *chairō*, the origin of the word *greeting*.

JAMES 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.

1. joy [G5479, chara, from G5463]. Here we have a play on the word "greeting" in 1:1. Not just some happiness. Not just some emotion. Joy vibrates the whole soul. It is the soul singing. It is the spirit soaring. It is not dependent upon circumstances.
2. Consider [G2233, he_ geomai]. Makes it happen. Lead your thoughts. Make a determination. Draw a conclusion. Take charge. Focus.
3. all joy. So, even though joy is always deep within the soul if the Holy Spirit abides (Gal 5:22-23), it requires a response to obtain the full [undiluted] joy. We must make it surface and it bubbles over. In trials, choose joy!
4. my brethren. James begins with the assumption that his readers are Christians in full standing. "My" makes him a brother with them. He wants to give this instruction so that they remain that way. Later, he will admonish certain behaviors and command certain responses.
5. when (whenever). Not **if** but **when**. Trials are a part of our ongoing life and not just occasionally, but often.
6. trials [G3986, peirasmois]. This Greek word can be translated either trial or temptation. It is from peirazo_ [G3985] meaning to make proof of, to attempt, to test, tempt, proving of your faith. It can refer to both internal and external trials. James almost certainly is referring to all forms (tests, temptations, etc.) so "temptation" [KJV] is too limiting. The word has an emphatic place in the Greek sentence (lit. "trials you fall into various").
7. encounter [G4045 peripto_ : "to fall around, among, into"]. We have no control over what the trial will be or when it will happen (fall into it). It comes often as a surprise, catching us unaware.
8. various [G4164, poikilois: "many colored, variegated, of many kinds"]. It shows that we will encounter trials of such a variety that we could never anticipate what they will be or how we could possibly work out a strategy in advance. It is expansive and emphatic.

JAMES 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

1. testing [G1383, dokimion: "the approving part"]. This is a change in Greek words from "testing" above. Why? Because James wants to focus on the *process* and the *result*. Behind this usage is probably the thought of a refining process with the result being better since some of the lesser material is gone. It could also refer to heating (tempering) of iron with the result of a stronger metal. Fortitude.
2. produces [G2716 katergazomai: "works out"]. Is it automatic? No. It can only happen if we respond correctly. (See "Let ... have" in the next verse.)
3. endurance [G5281 hupomone : "a remaining behind" endurance(7), perseverance(21), steadfastness(3)]. Patience [KJV] is very poor here. This word is not passive but forceful and active. It is not a grin-and-bear-it response. It has a deliberate tenacity in it. It is struggling against difficulty.
4. The benefits of trials can be viewed as heavenly rewards (see Peter) or virtues produced (Paul and James). Compare Mt 5:11-12 (Jesus); 2 Cor 8:2; 12:9.

JAMES 1:4 And let endurance have {its} perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

1. Let... have. We must participate in the process. NIV has "must finish" using "finish" for "perfect" limiting the impact of this important word. It should at least be "must be allowed to finish".
2. perfect. It is taken from a family of Greek words having a rich depth of meaning. Just look (below) at the possible meanings of these words. e.g., perfect, complete, mature, finish, fulfill.
 - a. G5046. teleios; from 5056; having reached its end, i.e. complete, by ext. perfect: complete(2), mature(4), more perfect(1), perfect(12).
 - b. G5047. teleiote_s; from 5046; completeness, perfection: maturity(1), perfect(1).
 - c. G5048. teleioo_ ; from 5046; to bring to an end, to complete, perfect: accomplish(2), accomplished(1), finish(1), fulfill(1), full number(1), made perfect(4), made...perfect(1), make...perfect(1), make perfect(1), perfect(2), perfected(7), reach...goal(1), spending the full number(1).
 - d. G5049. teleio_s; adv. from 5046; completely: completely(1).

- e. G5050. teleio_sis; from 5048; completion, perfection: fulfillment(1), perfection(1).
 - f. G5051. teleio_te_s; from 5048; a completer, finisher: perfecter(1).
 - g. G5052. telephoreo_; from 5056 and 5409; to bring fruit to perfection, hence to bear perfect offspring: bring...fruit to maturity(1).
 - h. G5053. teleutao_; from 5054; to complete, to come to an end, hence to die: deceased(1), die(4), died(5), dying(1), put(2).
 - i. G5054. teleute_; from 5055; a finishing, end, i.e. death: death(1).
 - j. G5055. teleo_; from 5056; to bring to an end, complete, fulfill: accomplished(3), carried(1), carry(1), completed(3), finish(1), finished(11), fulfilled(2), fulfilling(1), keeps(1), pay(2), perfected(1), performed(1).
 - k. G5056. telos; a prim. word; an end, a toll: continually*(1), custom(2), customs(1), end(24), ends(2), finished(1), fulfillment(1), goal(1), outcome(6), sum(1), utmost(1).
3. result [G2041, ergon: work]. Indicates a work that needs to be done.
 4. its perfect result. This is not some single virtue. Three characteristics are given to describe this perfect result: (a) perfect and (b) complete, (c) lacking in nothing.
 5. perfect [teleioi, from G5046 teleios]. The Bible does not use "perfect" in some absolute sense. For example, Noah is called perfect or blameless [Heb. tamim, a word that corresponds to the Greek teleios]. Noah was a person of integrity, without the evil intent used a few verses earlier to describe others (Gen 6:5-9). See comments on James 1:8 below. Perfection, like other terms related to salvation, must be viewed from both a "now" and a "not yet" perspective. There is a sense where Christians can be "perfect" now, but they are still a long ways from the "perfect" God intends for them. A few verses from Paul on this topic might be helpful (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:6; 13:10; Eph 4:13; Col 4:12; Phil 3:15; Heb 5:14; 9:11; James 1:4, 17, 25; 3:2; 1 Jn 4:18). A very important statement is given us by Jesus: "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). The idea of perfection is clearly related to the concept of regaining the image of God [imitatio Dei] lost in the Fall. What does that mean? Christ has come to show us! If we imitate Him we will be like the Father (Mt 19:11; Phil 2:1-18).
 6. complete [G3648, holokle_ros]. Here is a compound word with one of its sources taken from the family of words given above. The stress is on the completeness in terms of having all its parts. The whole burnt offering meant that everything that could be eaten was burned up. Nothing was left over for priest or worshiper to eat. Has the meaning of *entire* or *whole*.
 - a. G3646. holokauto_ma; from 3650 and 2545; a whole burnt offering: burnt offerings(1), whole burnt offerings(2).
 - b. G3647. holokle_ria; from 3648; completeness, soundness: perfect health(1).
 - c. G3648. holokle_ros; from 3650 and 2819; complete, entire: complete(2).
 - d. G3650. holos; a prim. word; whole, complete: all(49), all all(1), completely(1), entire(5), entirely(1), full(1), one piece(1), throughout(1), whole(49), wholly(1).
 - e. G3651. holoteles; from 3650 and 5056; complete, perfect: entirely(1).
 7. perfect and complete [teleioi kai holokle_roi]. When *perfect* and *complete* are placed together, *complete* refers to having all the necessary parts, and *perfect* refers to the parts functioning well together. There is *integrity* (the now) while striving for *integration* (the not yet). Christian character is evident in the life, but growth in holiness is also evident.
 8. blameless (not used here) is a related term.
 - a. G273. amemptos; from 1 (as a neg. pref.) and 3201; blameless: blameless(2), blamelessly(1), faultless(1), without blame(1) -- Lk 1:6; Phil 2:15; 3:6; 1 Thes 3:13; Heb 8:7
 - b. G274. amempto_s; adv. from 273; blamelessly: blamelessly(1), without blame(1) -- 1 Thes 2:10; 5:23.
 - c. G298. amo_me_tos; from 1 (as a neg. pref.) and 3469; blameless: blameless(1) -- 2 Per 3:14.
 - d. G299b. amo_mos; from 1 (as a neg. pref.) and 3470; without blemish: above reproach(1), blameless(5), unblemished(1), without blemish(1) -- Eph 1:4; 5:27; Phil 2:15; Col 1:22; Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:9; Jude 1:24; Rev 14:5
 - e. G677. aproskopos; from 1 (as a neg. pref.) and 4350; not causing to stumble, not stumbling: blameless(2), no offense(1) -- Act 24:16; 1 Cor 10:32; Phil 1:10.
 9. lacking in nothing. This completes the triad. The main point is that the standard has been met. This life may be described by all the key terms in the Bible: righteous, holy, innocent, blameless, pure, unblemished, etc. (cf. Eph 1:4; Phil 2:5; Col 1:22; 1 Thes 2:10; 5:23; 2 Pet 3:14). Here we

have a person wholly devoted to God and to the goals of His kingdom -- a blameless life characterized by focused obedience. This person is fully ready for either service or heaven.

10. An example. A perfect and complete car is one that does what cars are supposed to do (take you where you want to go). It does not stop being perfect when it gets a dent in the fender. But a car that is missing a wheel is not a perfect car.

JAMES 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask[c] of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

1. lacks. James deliberately uses the "lack" in the previous verse as a catchword. He is forging a unity among the sections. He clearly assumes the possibility of a lack in wisdom. Does that mean that it is not needed for the perfection above? By no means! He is showing us what he means by perfection -- present possession but a greater future realization. Paul connects perfect and wisdom in 1 Cor 2:4-6.
2. wisdom. In fact, if a person is not always seeking wisdom, then the person is not wise! According to Proverbs, a characteristic of wisdom is the continual seeking of wisdom. And here it is in the present tense (keep on asking of God)! Of course, it is necessary to the process of endurance/perseverance. It is understanding the divine plan and responding to it. In 1 Cor 1, wisdom is choosing the crucified Christ. A divine perspective of salvation, history, etc.
3. ask of God, Who. The focus is on the character of God.
4. generously [G574, haplo_s: simply, sincerely - found only here]. It also could mean with an undivided mind (simple). Without hesitation. Without mental reservation. This interpretation fits well as a contrast to the vacillating petitioner below. It is difficult to express this word in English. Note the related words.
 - a. [G572 hoplote_s]: liberality, simplicity, sincerely, singleness (2 Cor 8:2; 9:11, 13; 11:3; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22; Rom 12:8).
 - b. [G573, haplous: single, simple, clear]. Mt 6:22; Lk 11:34
5. without reproach. God neither scolds nor berates His children for their lack. In fact, He rarely even reminds us of this lack. We must take the initiative. We must seek Him with all our hearts. He wants us to want to want Him. He does not want to be an after-thought, (a last resort), the one we finally call when we find we cannot make it on our own.
6. But we should not stop there with the idea of wisdom. Because James is Jewish and writing to Jewish readers, we should ask what is wisdom as viewed from an OT perspective. It is God! See Proverbs 8. When we are asking for wisdom, we are really asking for God's greater presence and guidance in our lives. James uses Wisdom as another way of saying Holy Spirit (see Luke 11:5-13; Mt 7:7-8). Paul, writing to a mostly Gentile audience, sticks with *Spirit*. The Presence is a transforming Presence. He is not just with us in some enigmatic way, there is a clear interaction. This is why so many people fear Him and will not trust Him. (See doubts below.) They fear that God has some selfish motives and He will be changing us in ways we do not want. So we hold back. We want a wisdom that will get us through this particular trial, but we do not want Wisdom that will change our whole perspective on life. Wisdom comes to us through the crucified Christ (1 Cor 1:24; 2:4-6). Wisdom is wanting the character of God (image of God). It is seeking those things that are fundamental to His character and the work of His kingdom. Let us add to our chart above.

MIND	HEART	WILL	
Elements of Faith	Affirming	Trusting	Obedying
Faith in Jesus	Christ	Jesus/Savior	Lord
God is (image)	True	Good	Right/Just
Wisdom seeks	Truth	Goodness	Righteousness/ Justice

The "perfect" person (in the image of God) is guided by God's wisdom and brings all areas to focus in this way.

THE MIND - THINKING: loves truth, seeks truth

THE HEART - BEING: really wants to be good

THE WILL - DOING: what is right or just (walking uprightly)

JAMES 1:6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

1. faith. See the charts above.
2. without any doubting ("no doubt at all").
3. doubting [diakrinomenos, from G1252 diakrino_ : distinguish, judge] refers to one who is divided in mind and wavers between two opinions. Doubt is an insult to the character of God. Doubts set us up as a judge of God. His power is released in the admission of our need and in the confidence in His goodness. "YHWH ELOHIM is a sun an a shield; YHWH gives grace and glory. No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly [with integrity]" (Psa 84:11; read the entire psalm). We must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek him (Heb 11:6).
4. the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. Probably we are expected to see ourselves at the mercy of the surf, which cannot help us because it is driven and tossed by the wind. Picture yourself trying to land a boat when you have no control at all over the surf. If the wind would just be constant in your direction you could make it to shore.

JAMES 1:7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,

1. Why is doubting so bad? Has God set up some arbitrary rules about getting answers to prayer? (Other people seem to have discovered the "rules" but I haven't.) Why it is such a big secret? Why do I have to jump through some hoops to get answers? Why doesn't He just have mercy on me and answer my desperate cry? The answer, of course, is to be found in His character. He does not make up arbitrary rules. He is simply being God. He cannot be what He is not. (See "no shadow of turning" below.) If I do not receive the answer to my prayer, it is because He is holy, true, good, just, and loving.
2. not to expect. Of course not. How can you expect when you don't expect? Perhaps you have come to the place of having faith in faith. Or even faith in some promise you have discovered that appears to commit God to giving you what you want. Faith cannot be in the promises of God. It must be in the God who makes the promise. Until you discover the distinction you will have many disappointments. On the other hand, God may answer prayers of even the most doubting person. He is a gracious God and will not be limited by arbitrary rules. But He is always limited by His character. He never will act in any way opposite to His character.
3. The opposite of faith is unbelief, not doubt. It is not always bad to have doubts (the thought). What is bad is to be doubting (the act). Doubts (as thoughts) should spur us to a re-examining of the issue and arriving at an even greater commitment (faith).
4. not receive anything. The people of faith in God know that they will always receive an answer to their prayers. They don't know what it will be, but they know it will be *something*.

JAMES 1:8 {being} a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

1. double-minded man. Having introduced us to the idea of a person who is perfect, complete, lacking nothing, James now indicates a person who is not. He is the two-soul person [G1374, dipsuchos]. A person who is facing two directions at once.
2. a model might help. A proper alignment.

IT SHOULD BE LIKE THIS

Visible --> body --> soul --> spirit --> Invisible

Visible = WORLD; Invisible = GOD

The arrow (-->) refers to focus, intent, service, love. Here all the "elements" of the person are focused in God. The body serves the soul, and the soul serves the spirit, and the spirit serves God.

"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look [G991, blepo_] not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:16-18; cf. Rom 8:24-25; Heb 11:1, 13-16).

"Hear, O Israel! YHWH is our God, YHWH is one! You shall love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut 6:5; cf. Mt 22:37; Mk 12:29-30; Lk 10:27; John 13:34-35). The "love neighbor" command Jesus gave as the second commandment gives us insight into how we should relate to the Visible World (Mt 22:39-40; Mk 12:31; Lk 10:27). The idea of God being one is important to this discussion. It is this oneness (integrity) we seek, so that we will no longer be double-minded. Matching the terms in this passage with the above diagram give us:

- heart = the inner person (spirit)
- might = body

THE DOUBLE-MINDED [TWO-SOULED] PERSON

Visible <-- body <--soul-2 | soul-1--> spirit--> Invisible

soul-1 is the true self

soul-2 is the false self (not a actual entity)

Here the body serves the world (visible). Now in one sense the person is trying to make the world serve the body. But in truth the world is the master not the servant. The person (body, soul, and spirit) is made to serve, not to be served (Rom 12:1-3). When people seek to be served then they lose the true purpose of life and they are no longer being what they were intended to be (remember the car!). Therefore, they are not perfect in the sense described above. It is important to remember that James is addressing fellow Christians. Many Christians struggle with the problem of being double-minded. Remember Augustine's prayer: "O Lord, grant me purity, but not yet."

3. Intent/Integrity. "Perfect" addresses intent not performance. With growth and maturity, performance will become more consistent. All through our lives there will be blind spots, involving areas within the person that have not yet been integrated with the whole person. However, if the life is characterized by integrity of intent, then integration will follow. However, it will be an ongoing process not completed in this lifetime. In this life we are responsible to deal radically with any intent that is towards evil and not towards God. This problem was recognized way back in Genesis.

"Then YHWH saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5).

- a. intent [H3336, yetser]
- b. continually. Actually this word interprets two Hebrew words: [H3605, kol: all, whole] and [H3117, yom: day].
- c. evil [H7451a, ra: evil]
- d. thoughts [H4284, machashabah, machashebeth: thought, device]
- e. heart [H3820, leb: the inner person]. This "heart" includes the mind, heart, and will as used in the charts above.

However, in case we think that this evil intent is the condition of everyone, just a few verses later, Noah is described. "But Noah found favor in the eyes of YHWH. These are {the records of} the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God" (Gen 6:8-9).

- a. blameless. [H8549, tamim]. complete, sound; without defect(36), blameless..(23), unblemished/without blemish(14), perfect(6), integrity(4), whole(2), complete(1), entire(1), full(1), intact(1), sincerity(1), uprightly(1).
- b. walked [H1980, halak: to go, come, walk] This word is used in many different ways.

JAMES 1:9 But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position;

1. But [de]. This is an important editorial device used several times (1:5, 9, 19, 22) to introduce new sections.
2. humble circumstances [G5011, tapeinos: lowly, mean, insignificant, weak, poor]. Since this person is contrasted with the rich man in the next verse, the primary meaning here should be "poor" but the other meanings should not be ignored.
3. glory [G2744, kauchaomai, to boast]. The rich (below) tend to glory in their present circumstances. The poor are asked to overlook that and see life from a future perspective.
4. high position. What is this high position? Is it the "eternal weight of glory" we saw above? Of course, there are the "here and now" rewards of new dignity and worth (remember James chooses to be a slave). But he perhaps means the honor of serving and suffering for Jesus (cf. Acts 5:41; Mt 5:11-12).
 - a. "They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and {then} released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for {His} name" (Acts 5:40-41).
 - b. "Blessed are you when {people} insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mt 5:11-12).
 - c. "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mt 20:26-28).

JAMES 1:10 and the rich man {is to glory} in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.

JAMES 1:11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers[a] the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

1. OT background: Is 40:6-7; Psa 103:15-16 (cf. 1 Pet 1:24)
2. Although we are not told specifically, this is probably a rich *Christian* (the position of many scholars).
3. Here is a person who is in danger of focusing on the Visible and not the Invisible, the Temporal and not the Eternal. The rich (Christian or non-Christian) is asked to consider the meaninglessness of wealth since death is the experience we all must face.
4. The child who has a dollar, often does not mind giving a tithe to God (10 cents). But the person who makes \$50,000 a year has a real problem giving \$5,000 to God.
5. withers. The aorist tense shows the suddenness and completeness of the withering. Note that "will fade away" is future tense.
6. burning heat or scorching wind [G2742, kauso_n: burning heat]. Perhaps refers to the sirocco (SW wind that blows in the spring). But "burning heat" (KJV) fits better with the idea of the sun coming up. This picture is a very common one in the OT showing the transience of earthly life. The flower represents the time when the person is at his/her best (by worldly standards).
7. appearance [proso_pon].
8. beauty [euprepeia]. Focus is on its short life. Beauty (again as viewed by worldly standards) is so quickly gone.
9. fade away. It is the rich man, not his wealth, who will fade away. Is the rich man here the same as in 5:1-6? Perhaps, but I do not think so. This passage at least includes rich Christians; the one in chapter 5 clearly does not.

JAMES 1:12 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.

1. We have the end of a section. It is shown by a framing device (very common in the Bible). Words, phrases, sometimes ideas are given at the opening and closing. Here we have *trials*, *perseveres* (endure), *approved* (same Greek word as "testing of your faith" in 1:3).

2. Perseverance is the proper response to trials, resistance is the proper response to temptation (next section). Endures trials [hypomenei peirasmon].
3. Blessed is a man. A typical OT phrase (Psa 1:1; 32:2; 33:4; 84:12; Prov 8:34; Isa 56:2; Jer 17:7; cf James 5:1-11). Blessed [G3107, makarios] is more than happiness. Happiness is **transient** (like the grass mentioned above); blessed is **transcendent** (it is not affected by circumstances of life). It is characterized by joy and peace.
4. approved [G1384, dokimos]. The term is used in the testing of metals. "Stood the test" catches the meaning. A corresponding word [G1383] is used in 1:3 ("testing of your faith"). Here is a family of related words.
 - a. G1381a. dokimazo_; from 1384; to test, by impl. to approve: analyze(2), approve(3), approved(1), approves(1), examine(4), examines(1), prove(1), proving(1), see fit(1), test(2), tested(3), try(1), trying to learn(1).
 - b. G1381b. dokimasia; from 1381a; a testing, a proving: testing(1).
 - c. G1382. dokime_; from 1384; (the process or result of) trial, proving, approval: ordeal(1), proof(2), proven character(2), proven worth(1), test(1).
 - d. G1383. dokimion; from 1384; a testing: proof(1), testing(1).
 - e. G1384. dokimos; from 1209; tested, approved: approved(7).
 - f. Some examples: Rom 14:18; 16:10; 1 Cor 11:19; 2 Cor 10:18; 13:7; 1 Th 2:4; 2 Tim 2:15
5. will receive (future tense).
6. crown [G4735, stephanos]. Most often used for a victor's crown (occasionally for a kingly one).
7. of life. Crown which is life. This refers to more than the eternal life given here and now. It is the "not yet" of eternal life. We must persevere in order to receive this life. A proper picture here perhaps is a race. One does not receive the crown for starting the race, or even for continuing to run (although both are necessary if one is to finish). The crown is given only to the one who finishes the race.

JAMES 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

1. I believe that a new section starts here (or at 1:12). He has dealt with the person who endures successfully (with wisdom). He has presented the person who tries to endure without wisdom (the two-souled person). Now he talks about the people who failed. These people quite often blame God. They might say, "The test was too hard." I prefer to stick with "test/trials" instead of "tempt" as given in most translations. Some scholars agree. To state that God does not tempt people is to state the obvious. What James is saying here is deeper than that. God does test people. But James is saying that God does not test people so that they will fail. Notice that he does not mention Satan as the source of our problems. He wants us to own up to our responsibility for failure. If we fail, we cannot blame Him. Failure was not His purpose.
2. tempted [G3985, peirazo_]. It is the same basic word as used for trials above. There it was the noun, here we have the verb. The verb form is more easily associated with temptation. However, I believe that *trials* (noun) and *test* (verb) fit better with where James is going with this passage. God does test people, but He does not tempt them. He allows them to be tempted and tested (Jer 17:9-10, Psa 26:2).
3. test [H5254, nasah]. God tests people (Gen 22:1; Ex 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Dt 8:16; Jg 2:21-22; 3:1; 7:4; 2 Chr 32:31; Psa 11:4-5; 26:2; Jer 17:9-10; 20:12; Zech 13:9).
4. Israel tested God (Deut 6:16; cf. Exod 17:7; Num 14:22; Deut 33:8).
5. God cannot be tempted [G551, apeirastos] by evil. He does at times invite people to test Him (consider the offer to King Ahaz, Jer 7:10-12). But He cannot be tempted (successfully?). Another possible translation: God cannot be solicited to do evil. Consider again the idea of God being simple. See below (1:17). There are no shadows in the Father of Lights.
6. A possible translation (Davids): God ought not to be tested by evil persons, and He does not test anyone. So we must not blame Him.
7. He Himself does not tempt anyone. God does not test in the sense of desiring our failure. He does not trick us. He offers us wisdom to pass the test. He is not the cause of our failure! But He allows us to be tempted. And He tries us (tests us). God does not want anyone to fall into evil. Testing/tempting others to evil would make God a partner with evil.

8. James does not try to solve all our theological questions. He merely states the obvious. He does not deal with the origin of evil, or the various levels of God's involvement in our testings and temptations.
 - a. Level-1. God is the source of everything. He allowed the possibility of sin.
 - b. Level-2. But God is not the source of evil.
 - c. Level-3. God tests people.
 - d. Level-4. But God does not test us with the intention that we fail (i.e., an evil intent).
9. James's focus is practical rather than theoretical. What makes a given situation a test is not that God has put one there but that the person is willing to disobey Him. The enticement to disobey never comes from Him!!
10. We cannot blame Satan. James will introduce demonic influence later (3:15; 4:7) but not here. He does not want to give us anything to blame other than ourselves. "The devil made me do it!" is not allowed.
11. James believed in a "bent to evil" in the double-soul person. But he does not want us to blame that either. He wants us to take full responsibility for our sin. However, we need help. Therefore to request for wisdom is not optional. God's wisdom is not just for people who cannot handle life. Everyone needs God to help overcome the trials.

JAMES 1:14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust [desire].

JAMES 1:15 Then when lust [desire] has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

1. Having built the foundation that we have only ourselves to blame for failure, James now provides us with a simple picture of the steps in that failure. Typically, James does not struggle with the "small" details of the process. He lays it out as a sequence that is easy to follow: desire --> sin --> death. He wants us to get the big picture. However, James does expand the details of the process somewhat, but these details should not be pressed too far.
2. tempted. Here we have the verb form of the noun used above (1:2), which I concluded should be *trials* instead of *temptations*. It is quite possible that we should stay with the broader term (tried) here also.
3. lust [G1939, *epithumia*]. The translation probably should be *desire* in this context. It does not have to refer to something that is evil. The word is used for Jesus (Lk 22:15).
 - a. G1937. *epithumeo*; from 1909 and 2372; desire, lust after: covet(2), coveted(1), craved(1), desire(1), desired(2), desires(1), gladly(1), long(3), longing(1), lust(2), sets its desire(1).
 - b. G1938. *epithume_te_s*; from 1937; one who desires: crave*(1).
 - c. G1939. *epithumia*; from 1937; desire, passionate longing, lust: coveting(2), desire(4), desires(8), earnestly(1), impulses(1), long(1), lust(5), lustful(1), lusts(15).
4. own desire. This places the emphasis where James wants it. Although the stimulus may come from the visible world, the process does not begin until somehow my **own** desire is involved.
5. carried away and enticed (present tense). James wants us to see a two-step process in the involvement of desire. However, scholars struggle with these terms. Some believe that James is thinking in terms taken from fishing and hunting. But before we make the mistake of thinking we know exactly what was in the mind of James when he used these terms, let's stay on safer ground. It seems very likely that he wants us to see that there are initial stages to the process where the process could be stopped with a swift stroke. We are to see at the very beginning, some growing but yet unfocused desire that, if dealt with immediately, is brought back into line.
 - a. carried away. Perhaps "drawn out" is better. Some want us to picture a fish caught with a hook and being drawn out of the water. That picture perhaps moves the process along too fast. Probably the picture is of the fish being drawn out of its normal environment (where it is necessary to survive).
 - b. enticed. a picture of finding attractive bait in a trap.
6. conceived ... gives birth. The picture has changed to the birth process. If James had stayed with the former picture, he might have talked about desire taking the bait. Why does he change? He wants to contrast this process with the very different birth process illustrated in 1:18. He will use related terms in both (brings forth [1:15], brought us forth [1:18]). But he also wants to emphasize that there is a chain of events. *Conceived* takes place in a brief moment, but *birth*

comes later. They do not happen at the same moment; there is a time span between them. But sin is the "child" that is born.

7. accomplished ... brings forth. Again the stress is on a chain of events, not a single act. So, even though we will never fully understand this process we should grasp the picture of delayed action. Just imagine, if death came immediately after the impulse no one would be alive.
8. death. Here James is probably picturing eternal death. We would have made it clear that there is both spiritual death and eternal death. If desire alone brought death, then not even Jesus would have survived. Remember He struggled with a conflict of desires in the garden. Jesus desired not to go to the cross. But His desire to serve the Father was greater.
9. But we must not get distracted from where James wants to go. It is not God who causes us to sin. It is not "the Devil made me do it", and it is not my parents (spouse, siblings, friends, etc.) who caused me to sin. I am the cause! Repentance is impossible if we refuse to take full responsibility for our sins. James focuses on the result of evil desire, not its origin. Sin is not the end, death is. The offspring of sin is death (Rom 7:7-12; 5:12; 6:21; Gen 2:17; Ezek 18:4). This birth to death is in sharp contrast to 1:12 and 1:18 where we have birth to life. All are chain sequences.

EXCURSUS #1. IMPULSE, DESIRE, INTENT

This idea of a progression is accepted by most every Bible scholar and Christian thinker. The process is far too complex for anyone to understand fully, but it is helpful to make the attempt as in the following example. But we need to realize that no explanation is going to be exact or complete. Here is one famous description of the process: "At first it is a mere thought confronting the mind; then imagination paints it in stronger colors; only after that do we take pleasure in it, and the will makes a false move, and we give our assent" (Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*).

Desire was good at creation. It is essential for survival -- we would not live very long without desire for food, water, shelter, etc. The human race would not survive without the desire for sex. In Jewish thought even an impulse to evil is not sin -- it can simply be an undifferentiated desire. Desire by nature will transgress the limits of the law. The uncurbed intent [Heb. yetser] will certainly lead to sin.

When an impulse to fulfill a desire in an immoral manner becomes an intent, then it gives birth to sin. James stresses the progressive nature of the process. For example there is a space between intent and performance as in the case of Cain. "And YHWH had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then YHWH said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not {your countenance} be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it'" (Gen 4:4b-7).

Consider the instruction by Jesus: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery' [Ex 20:14]; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:27-28). It seems obvious that one of the reasons Jesus gave this teaching was so "sin would become utterly sinful [KJV: exceeding sinful]" (Rom 7:13) and that we should be aware of how subtle sin is. This is the purpose of the Law. And when we glibly think that we have it all together and are fully obeying the law, we have missed the whole purpose of the Law. The Law is there to show us our inability to be righteous and holy. The Law points us to Jesus (Gal 3:19-24; Rom 3:20).

Scholars tell us that what Jesus has done is to combine the adultery commandment (Exod 20:14) with the covet commandment (20:17). Men may brag that they have never committed the act of adultery, but Jesus says that to covet your neighbor's wife is to commit adultery.

Any normal man who is honest knows the great dangers here. How is it possible to maintain purity in the normal encounters of life? The idea is to "nip it in the bud" as the saying goes. One cannot stop the impulses of the body. For example, a man's body was made to desire a woman's body. It is normal

and not sinful. But it must be stopped before this normal bodily desire affects the desires of the soul and the spirit.

To be perfect in the sense used by James, the intent (I prefer this term to "desire" since "intent" recognizes that I have choices) of the body, spirit and soul are focused in God. He is the central love figure of our lives. To maintain this perfection we must practice discipline in all the areas of our lives (spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, etc.) These verses emphasize the difficulty of the disciplines in the physical realm. For most people it is hard to keep the body focused in God. It "lives and breathes" in the visible world. Paul realized that this area is of great concern: "... but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified" (1 Cor 9:27).

Jesus uses an even more dramatic picture. The verse regarding adultery is followed by this command: "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matt 5:29-30). Now we should realize that these instructions should not be taken literally, since the removal an eye (or even both eyes!) would not solve the problem of lust. What Jesus is trying to shock us into realizing is that (1) we can and must have control over the process, and (2) the inner person must protect itself (with a radical discipline) from the bodily impulse.

The impulse is not evil, but to entertain it is. To linger over it is to allow it to grow and to threaten change in the intent of the heart.

What should we do if we allow any of the bodily impulses to override the intent of the soul and spirit? The answer comes at two levels. Let me use the metaphor of a car again.

My old car is perfect when it does what a car is supposed to do (e.g., take me back and forth to work). It also needs to be complete (all the parts in fairly good running order). The car really is not perfect if I have to "nurse" it along to get where I want to go. Let me use tires as an example.

1. In the first case, I keep good tires on my car. However, one day I have a flat tire. I simply get out, put on the spare, take the tire in and get it repaired.
2. In the second case, I go around with bald tires. I am placing myself in danger of such things as not providing the traction I need and sliding off the road or, worse yet, having a blowout and a possible crash. Here, at the very least, I am going to have to buy a new tire. Perhaps even some car repair.

Let me now apply my pictures. The first case corresponds to a person who slips momentarily into the sin (e.g., going beyond impulse to a desire that is harbored momentarily). Another way of saying this is that the intent of the body has changed but not the intent of the soul and spirit. This person need only to ask forgiveness and acknowledge needing help. There is not loss of standing before God.

The second person however is a person who has given this desire a harbor within the soul (not just the body). In such cases the Holy Spirit has been faithful to urge a different course of action, but these have been ignored or deliberately rejected (i.e. the intent of the spirit has now changed). It is almost certain that this person has lost the state of grace previous experienced and must seek it again.

NEW CHART INCLUDING THE ROUTE TO DEATH

trial --> endurance --> perfect result --> crown of life

trial --> desire-impulse-intent --> sin --> spiritual death --> eternal death

trial (two-souled) --> wavering (doubt) could go either way --> uncurbed desire --> failure --> accuse God

RETURN TO JAMES, CHAPTER 1

JAMES 1:16 Do not be deceived[c], my beloved brethren.

1. deceived. Present tense. Do not go on being deceived.
2. A hinge verse. It looks back and forward. Do not be deceived regarding your personal responsibility for the desire-> sin-> death sequence. Do not be deceived about the goodness of God.
3. This deception is a serious error. The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9-11). God is not mocked, you reap what you sow (Gal 6:7-8). If we say that we have no sin, we are liars (1 Jn 1:8; cf. 1 Jn 3:6-7; 2 Pet 3:11-18).
4. my beloved brethren. They are still Christians, although they are in danger of serious error, and falling from grace.

JAMES 1:17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

1. every good thing given.
 - a. every. God is the source of everything good. Nothing good comes into your life that is not from God.
 - b. good thing. The whole spectrum of good. There are many "things" we receive that are not recognized as good (especially not at first).
 - c. given. It is a deliberate act of God that you receive these things. It is not by chance or fate or something earned.
 - d. [supporting an idea from above]: He does not bring trials for the purpose of getting people to fail.
2. every perfect gift.
 - a. every. Again the emphasis on God being the source of everything good. This time it is more specific: perfect gift
 - b. gift. Emphasizing that it is not earned, but is a gift. Perhaps the context here is broader than the above, but James definitely wants us to remember the wisdom given with a single-minded purpose (1:5).
 - c. perfect. Gifts are not random ideas. Every gift is exactly what you need. It is given to make you perfect (shaping you into the person you are intended to be). See above for the whole idea of image of God, Christlikeness etc.
3. From above. Wisdom is from above (3:15). He does not send the test, He sends wisdom to handle the test, unless you choose to be deceived.
4. Father of Lights. The NIV makes it "heavenly lights" but "heavenly" is not in the Greek text, and Father of Lights should not be limited to the heavenly creation. The picture is not only of the creation in Genesis ("Let there be light" etc) but it also looks forward to the new creation. (See "brought us forth by the word of truth" in 1:18). It could also include the idea of light as both revelation (cf. wisdom) and life (cf. Jn 1:4-9; 1 Jn 1:5). God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 Jn 1:5). Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life" (Jn 8:12; cf. 1:4). Light brings forth life (holds for both creations).
5. no variation or shifting shadow. He is compared to Sun and Moon. They give light. Yes. But in varying degrees (bright at noon, long shadows in the evening). In Him there are no shadows (cf. the long shadows in the evening). No change in intensity, etc.
6. These ideas tie together many of the thoughts above. God gives wisdom (light), but we might choose a "wisdom" that has many shadows. We are confused about revelation and life. We accuse God as being the source of shadows, when that could never be.

JAMES 1:18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among {His} creatures.

1. exercise of His will [boule theis from G1014, boulomai: to will]. It shows a deliberate choice of God and action by God. It is not by chance or even as some response to circumstances out of control. It is part of His overall plan and purpose.

2. He brought us forth. The background is that of a woman giving birth to a child. (Compare desire conceiving and giving birth to sin.) It is a metaphor which we often call the New Birth. It is found in the OT (Num 11:12; Dt 32:18; Psa 90:2; Isa 66:13) and NT (John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; 1 Pet 1:3, 23; 1 Jn 3:9).
3. word of truth. Here again the background is Genesis 1, where we are told often that God spoke and it happened. So all the great truths of John 1:1-18 are part of the meaning here (e.g., Jesus is the Word). It also includes Jesus' claim to be the Truth (John 14:6). The word of truth is also the wisdom given to us (1:5) from above (3:17-18). But it also includes the objective word (the Bible) and the subjective word (the Spirit). It looks forward to passages such as 1:21-25 (the word implanted) as well as contrasting passages regarding the misuse of speech (1:19-21; 3:1-18).
4. a kind of. Using nature as a metaphor as well as using OT commandments regarding first-fruit (Ex 34:22; Lev 23:10).
5. first-fruit. This is the first portion of the harvest, a promise of what is to come (cf. Paul's picture of down payment, Eph 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22). See also Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15:20, 23 [G0536]; 16:15; Rev 14:4. Looking at what God has done to Christians (New Birth, Wisdom, etc.) gives us a picture of what the future holds.
6. among {His} creatures. God intends to redeem all of His creation (Rom 8:19-25).

JAMES 1:19 {This} you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak {and} slow to anger;

1. you know. There is a textual problem here (the difference of one letter). Is it an indicative (iste, you know) or an imperative (o_ste, know this)? NASB assumes the indicative ("you know") while the NIV assumes the imperative ("take note of this"). The KJV ("wherefore") misses it completely. If 1:19a belongs with the previous verses, then NASB is best. If it looks forward to the following verses, then NIV is best.
2. my beloved brethren. James want to remind them that the admonishments that follow are for his fellow Christians. He is not talking about their initial salvation. (They are already "saved" as shown in 1:18 "brought forth by the word of truth".) He is telling them what they must do to go on to perfection (holiness). This statement also would support the idea that the basic purpose of the "proverb" was unity and harmony in the church.
3. quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. A proverbial saying similar to Prov 13:3; 15:1; 29:20. Probably related to 3:1. Perhaps some have chosen themselves to be teachers in the church and are busily instructing others. And they are angry when they are not obeyed.
4. quick to hear. Eager to be instructed.
5. slow to speak. They should not be eager to be an instructor (cf. 3:1). Hesitant to give instruction or advice. Also being willing to ponder instruction before rejecting it.
6. slow to anger. Teachers should not be angry when their instruction is not heeded. Students should not be angry when they are corrected, rebuked, etc. But anger must be seen also in a broader context as seen in 1:20.

JAMES 1:20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

1. anger [G3709, orge_]. When we picture anger, we often think of an emotional outburst. But that picture does not fit the fundamental thrust of this Greek word. It is most often translated *wrath* and refers to a settled disposition. The Greek word *thumos* [G2372] fits better with an anger that is *hot* or *fierce*.
2. man [G435, ane_r: a man]. When this Greek word is used it most often refers to an individual. When all of humanity is indicated, then the Bible tends to use anthro_pos [G444: man, human, mankind].
3. anger of man. James probably intends for us to contrast the anger/wrath of an individual with the anger/wrath of God. If that is true, then James is picturing a person who has taken on the role of God in relationships. The anger/wrath of God always results in righteousness (rightness of relationship). By contrast, the "anger of man" refers to people who exalt themselves above others (judging, criticizing, treating others with contempt) which is destructive to relationships. James will have some very strong comments on this topic later (e.g., 4:11-12; cf. 2:8-13; 3:8-16; 1 Cor 4:3-5; Mt 7:1-5; Rom 2:1-4; 14:10-13).

4. righteousness of God. A rightness in all our relationships. There are four types of righteousness: (a) the character of God (b) righteousness established for us by God, (c) our personal righteousness, (d) heavenly righteousness. This verse probably refers to personal righteousness ("c" above) that reflects the character of God ("a" above).
5. achieve. Many Christians picture righteousness as God's righteousness being transferred to them at conversion ("b" above). They like to quote Paul that no one is righteous (Rom 3:9-18) -- statements that are actually derived from the OT. But that is not the whole story about righteousness. The context of this passage from Romans is that Paul is trying to show that no one can be justified through works (Rom 3:20). We must accept the righteousness made available to us by the death of Christ ("b" above). James tells us that righteousness is also something we achieve, i.e., personal righteousness ("c" above).
6. Later (3:18) James will picture righteousness as a fruit (harvest) from right responses. Anger is not one of them.
7. of God. However, it must be remembered that this personal righteousness is not something we achieve on our own. It is done in the context of the righteousness obtained for us by Jesus ("b" above) and with the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

JAMES 1:21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and {all} that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

1. putting aside [G659, *apotide_mi*, *apothemenoi*]. This term is used for taking off garments (cf. Acts 7:58). Here is a very important picture used by NT writers (Rom 13:12; Eph 4:22, 25; Col 3:8; Heb 12:1; James 1:21; 1 Pet 2:1). Paul uses another Greek term right alongside of this one [G554, *apekduomai*: laid aside]. (They are found together in Col 3:8-9.) The only other place it is found in the NT is at Col 2:15 where it is used of Jesus disarming [divested] rulers and authorities. All these usages are in the Greek aorist tense, which is used to express a single action that is completed in a point of time ("put off"), in contrast to the Greek present tense which refers to continuous action ("be putting off").
2. all. The use of *all* here supports the interpretation of the aorist action of the verb. Remember James is writing to people who are saved. He is telling them that there is something more that needs to be done and it should be done now and in a completed sense.
3. filthiness [G4507b, *rhuparia*]. From a family of words found only rarely in the NT. It is used of filthy clothes, sometimes in a metaphorical sense, as with the high priest Joshua (Zech 3:4-5). It can refer to a moral defilement that needs cleansing.
 - a. G4507a. *rhupaino_*; from 4509; to make filthy: filthy(1) -- Rev 22:11.
 - b. G4507b. *rhuparia*; from 4508; fig. filthiness: filthiness(1) -- James 1:21.
 - c. G4508. *rhuparos*; from 4509; filthy: dirty(1), filthy(1) -- James 2:2; Rev 22:11.
 - d. G4509. *rhupos*; a prim. word; filth: dirt(1) -- 1 Pet 3:21.
4. A passage in the book of Revelation is quite helpful here: "Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy" (Rev 22:11). This passage makes a clear distinction between those who will make it to heaven and those who will not. Take note of the two levels in each type. Those who will be excluded are those who (1) still do wrong and (2) still be filthy. Those who will make it into heaven are those who (1) still practice righteousness, and (2) those who keep themselves holy. *Wrong* is contrasted with *righteousness*. *Filthy* is contrasted with *holy*. These two levels correspond to two actions by God: justification (make righteous) and sanctification (make holy). But the stress in the book of Revelation as well as here in James is our part of these two acts. God makes us righteous, but we must practice righteousness. God makes us holy, but we must keep ourselves holy.
5. Holiness is closely related to purity in heart (the opposite of the filthiness given here). "And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 Jn 3:3). "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matt 5:8; cf. Acts 14:8-9). Later James will use the image of purity to show the two-fold nature of our response to God: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:8). Cleanse the hands corresponds to justification and purifying the hearts corresponds to sanctification.

6. {all} that remains of wickedness. "Superfluity of naughtiness" (KJV) is so outdated that it is practically meaningless to people today. NIV has "the evil that is so prevalent" which is better, but the NASB ("remains") is probably best.
7. remains [G4050, perisseia: abundance, remainder]. A common meaning is *abundance* which is the choice of the NIV in its use of *prevalent*. But there is another common meaning for this word group: remainder. Either interpretation is possible. However, "remains" fits the context best. Christians are called to rid themselves of every trace of wickedness (evil, malice, etc.).
8. wickedness [G2549, kakia]. Found 11 times in NT. Part of a family of words derived from kakos [G2556: bad, evil] which is found ca. 48 times in the NT. It is translated *malice* most often. And since malice matches better with intent, it is a good choice (cf. 1 Peter 2:1).
9. in humility [from G4240, praute_s: gentleness, meekness]. Although humility gives the sense of the expected action, we need to wonder why James did not use the Greek word that is more commonly translated *humility*, especially since he uses it later in the letter (4:6, 10; G5011-5014). The word here is more commonly translated *gentleness* or *meekness* [KJV]. It refers to a people who not only accept willingly God's authority over them, they purposely want to please Him. So the picture is of people who truly want the word to be implanted in them.
 - a. G4239a. praupathia; from 4239b and 3958; meekness: gentleness(1) -- 2 Tim 6:11.
 - b. G4239b. praus; of unc. or.; gentle: gentle(4) -- Mt 5:5; 11:29; 21:5; 1 Pet 3:4.
 - c. G4240. praute_s; from 4239b; gentleness: consideration(1), gentleness(8), humility(1), meekness(1) -- 1 Cor 4:20; 2 Cor 10:1; Gal 5:23, 6:1; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; 2 Tim 2:25; Tit 3:2; James 1:21; 3:13, 15.

This quality of the spirit also excluded the idea of vengeance and vindication. We are not to seek vengeance, but leave God to deal out wrath in His timing (Rom 12:19). And we are not to vindicate ourselves at the expense of others (1 Pet 2:12).
10. receive. It is not something that can be done by the person, it is the act of God. Nevertheless this act awaits our reception with meekness. See the gift mentioned in 1:5 and 1:17.
11. the word [G3056, logos]. See Excursus #2 below.
12. implanted [G1721, emphutos: to implant or to root]. Not engrafted [KJV]. Found only here in NT. James expects us to see a difference between being born of the word and the word being implanted in us. It is closely related to the giving of wisdom. It is only available to those who really want it and ask for it.
13. which is able to save your souls. Looks to the future salvation. It implies that we will not be saved if we do not allow the word to be implanted. So there is more to this life than simply being born of the word.

EXCURSUS #2. THE WORD

The Greek word *logos* [G3056, word] has a rich depth of meaning which will not be addressed here. The passages cited below are given merely as support to the interpretation above regarding the *implanted word*.

The phrase *implanted word* reminds us of the Parable of Sower, Seed, and Soils, which pictures the word being sown in various types of soils (Mt 13:3-8, 18-23; Mk 4:3-9, 14-20; Lk 8:5-8, 11-15). It appears to picture varying degrees of receiving the word. "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty" (Matt 13:22-23).

Jesus is the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1; cf. Jn 1:14; 1 Jn 1:1).

True followers of Jesus are described as those who hear His words and act on them (Mt 7:24-27; Lk 6:47-49; 8:21; 11:28; Jn 5:24; James 1:22-23). "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matt 7:24). "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21).

True disciples are pictured as abiding in the word and the word abiding in them (Jn 5:38; 8:31; Col 3:16; 1 Jn 1:10; 2:14). "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you continue[abide] in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine'" (John 8:31). However, as with the soils in the parable above, we have choices to make regarding the degree of acceptance of the word. "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms {and} hymns {and} spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness [lit. in His grace] in your hearts to God" (Col 3:16). Notice the role of wisdom here.

His disciples keep His word (Jn 8:51, 55; 14:23-24; 15:20; 17:6; 1 Jn 2:5). "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death" (John 8:51). "... but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him" (1 Jn 2:5).

- Only those who hold fast the word will be saved (1 Cor 15:2; Phil 2:16; Tit 1:9). "... by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain" (1 Cor 15:2). "... holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain" (Phil 2:16).

The word is accompanied by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:13; 12:8; Eph 1:13; 1 Th 1:5-6). "... for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake" (1 Thes 1:5).

The word is doing a work in the hearts of believers, i.e., beyond being born of the word (1 Th 2:13; 1 Tim 4:5-6; Heb 4:2; 5:11, 13; 6:1). "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted {it} not {as} the word of men, but {for} what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe" (1 Thes 2:13). It is a sanctifying work and a nourishing work (1 Tim 4:5-6; Jn 15:3). "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17). "For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant" (Heb 5:13). "... for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, {that is}, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Pet 1:23).

One of the most important passages on the topic of the *implanted word* is found in Hebrews: "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:12-13). We must be willing to allow the word to do this ongoing work in our lives. And we must make a deliberate effort to respond with integrity to the challenges the word brings into our lives.

Another valuable, but different, picture gives the same message of our responsibility for the house that God has cleansed. "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters. When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. Then it goes and takes {along} seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first ... blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it" (Luke 11:23-28).

RETURN TO JAMES, CHAPTER 1

Some scholars find a chiastic structure in 1:23-25. However, it appears to me that the structure is larger, going from 1:21 to 1:27.

- A. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and {all} that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

- B. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers
- C. who delude themselves.
- D. 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; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.
- E. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the {law} of liberty, and abides by it,
- D' not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.
- C' If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his {own} heart, this man's religion is worthless.
- B' Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of {our} God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress,
- A' and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Please note some of the matching words and/or thoughts.

- A-A' filthiness, remains of wickedness | unstained (pure/undefiled)
- B-B' doers of the word | visit orphans and widows
- C-C' delude | deceives
- D-D' forgotten | not a forgetful hearer
- E is the center of the chiasm and the most important. Here we find the concept: the perfect law of liberty. It also matches with D and D'
- D-E looks | looks
- E-D' abides | effectual doer

JAMES 1:22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

1. but [de]. James used it six times to introduce imperatives (1:6, 9, 19, 22; 4:7; 5:12) and frequently to make transitions between thoughts.
2. prove yourselves [ginesthe, from G1096, ginomai: to come into being, to happen, to become]. It is also found in James 3:1; Mt 10:16; Rom 12:16; 1 Cor 7:23; 2 Cor 6:14; Eph 5:1. This usage has a continuous force ("continue being" rather than "become").
3. doers [G4163, poie_te_s]. In Greek culture it meant *maker*, *composer* (e.g., *poets* in Acts 17:28), but it is used in the OT for doers of the Law. Found in James four of the six times in NT (1:22, 23, 25; 4:11; Rom 2:13; Acts 17:28). James deliberately uses *doers of the Word* instead of *doers of the Law*. For James *Law* is static, *Word* is dynamic (see later).
4. hearers [G202, akroate_s]. In classical Greek it meant *auditor* or *pupil*. Found in James three of the four times in NT (1:22, 23, 24; Rom 2:13). James is not thinking of students who are lazy or disinterested. He is picturing the students who seriously study the Law. They understand what is being taught, but do not put it into practice.
5. delude [G3884, paralogizomai: to reason falsely]. It is found only here and Col 1:24, where it refers to leading one astray from the faith. These people have deluded themselves regarding their salvation. Salvation involves more than thinking correctly. Later James will tell us that even the demons do that (2:19). But it is more complex than that. James is not thinking of people who have not put any teaching into practice. He has at least two groups of people in mind: (a) those who see their salvation as completed by some past practices (repentance, faith, etc.), or (b) those who see themselves on the path to final salvation because of their present practice (continue to trust Him, worship, service, etc.). Basically, he is referring to those people who have convinced (deluded) themselves that being "brought forth [born again] by the word of truth" (1:18) is sufficient to "save their souls" [final salvation] (1:21). The implanted word (1:21) must be kept alive in our hearts. And this can only happen when both the Heart [affections] and the Will are involved (not just the Mind). The Heart must value and trust the Word. The Will must obey it. The *word implanted* cannot grow in a rebellious and disobedient person. Using again the parable, we are responsible for the proper preparation and maintenance of the the soil where the seed is to grow. Jesus also used the picture of a builder to teach this same truth (Mt 7:21-27; Lk 6:46-49).
6. Being doers of the word is one of the most important themes of this book. Some people call this the key verse of the epistle.

JAMES 1:23 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;

1. Some people have, mistakenly I think, pictured the person James begins to describe here as a person who merely glances at his face in the mirror, never really getting a good or detailed view. They have used the fact that James uses a different word for *look* in 1:23 as is used in 1:25. But neither of these Greek words are normally used for a brief glance. There are many Greek words which could have been used. These two are carefully chosen.
2. he is like [outos eoiken]: "this one is like" [from G1858a, eoika: to be like]. Found only here and 1:6 in the NT. Here we have a choice to make. Is James giving us an allegory or simply providing an illustration? Since the book of James tends to be very practical, it is safest to see this as a simple illustration (a little proverb). However, it might be that James wanted us to ponder the little proverb and see possible extensions of it.
3. man (same as in 1:8 above).
4. looks [G2657, katanoeo_: to take note of, perceive]. Found in 1:24 also. This word does not refer to a hasty glance but to careful observation that involves comprehension by the Mind. The Mind is giving close attention to the meaning of what is seen.
5. natural [G1078, genesis: origin, birth].
6. face [G4383, prosopon: face, person].
7. natural face [to prosopon tes geneseos auton: "the face of the birth of him"]. This phrase probably refers to the person's physical appearance.
8. mirror. Not glass (KJV). Mirrors were made of polished metal in those days.

JAMES 1:24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

1. looked [katenoe_sen from G2657: same basic word as in 1:23]. However, here it is in the aorist tense.
2. forgotten [G1950, epilanthanomai: forget, neglect]. This verb is also in the aorist tense.
3. gone away (perfect tense). The perfect tense shows an action completed in the past but the effects of it remain in the present. So the sense here is a person who has gone away and stayed away. There appears to be a deliberate "confusion" of tenses here: *gone away* is perfect, while *looked* and *forgotten* are aorist. Perhaps James wants us to catch the idea that the normal state of the person is to be *gone away*. However, the person also repeatedly looks and forgets, with each event being a completed action.
4. immediately. Used to emphasize the aorist tense of *forgotten*.
5. The picture most people draw from this illustration is a person who forgets what should have been remembered. And it is likely the intended picture. However, there is another possible picture. Even if the following idea is not the intended picture it might be a legitimate extension. Consider the possibility that it is normal to forget what is seen in the mirror. For example, I look in the mirror in the morning to check if the hair is combed properly. Since I do not have a mirror with me as I go through my day, I assume that my hair remains properly combed (and forget all about it).

What one sees in the mirror is like a snapshot image to be carried away and not changed until the image is viewed again and updated. It is a static picture. I believe that, for James, the mirror represents the Law. He contrast this image with the concept of an *implanted word* (1:21) and the idea of *abiding* (1:25) in it. This picture is dynamic. The mirror concept is so limiting and needs to be replaced with a Living Word that "judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

JAMES 1:25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the {law} of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

1. We have come to the heart of the chiasm -- the central message. Remember, James is writing to a Jewish community. He is challenging them to a very different understanding of the Law. They honored the revelation of God to them as recorded for them (Hebrew Scriptures). It was their task to study their Scripture diligently, to interpret it correctly, and to apply it properly.

2. looks intently [G3879, parakupto_ (one word in the Greek): to stoop to look]. It is found only five times in the NT (Lk 24:12; Jn 20:5, 11; Jam 1:25; 1 Pet 1:12). Three of these verses refer to people stooping and looking into the tomb of Jesus. Both "stooping" and "looking" are elements of this word. One way of viewing this word is to see a person thoroughly absorbed in an investigation of a phenomenon (think of Sherlock Holmes down on his knees with a magnifying glass). Another possible picture focuses on the stooping as a form of humbling -- humbling in the sense of the truth being sought having priority over individual interests. Although both "looks" (1:23 and 1:25) refers to taking a serious examination, this one is more intense.
3. perfect [G5046, teleios]. See under 1:4.
4. law [G3551, nomos]. This is the normal word used throughout James and the NT for *law*.
5. perfect law. James wants us to contrast this new concept of Law with the typical Jewish concept of Law. This new law is perfect in the sense of being all that is needed to fully live the Christian life and to be ready for heaven. But what is this perfect law? We are given three clues: implanted word, liberty and abide. *Implanted word* has been discussed above.
6. liberty [G1657, eleutheria: freedom, liberty]. Found 11 times in NT. James wants us to picture Jewish Law as something that enslaves -- it takes over almost every aspect of your life. The *implanted word* sets us free! We need to save a more detailed explanation until we get to James 2:8-13 where *law of liberty* is again used. It is profitable to look at a corresponding treatment of this issue by Paul found in 2 Cor 3:1 - 4:6. This passage contains statements like: "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (3:6) and "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, {there} is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:17-18) and "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6).
7. abide [G3306, meno_ : to stay, abide, remain]. This word is extremely important in the NT, especially in the writing of John. What James is picturing here is the full expression of God's revelation (written Word, Jesus the Word, His teaching, the Spirit, etc.) abiding in us in a dynamic, living way as well as we abiding *in it* and *by it* in all our relationships (to God and others). This abiding relationship is a multi-dimensional freedom. It not only frees us **from** things (e.g., "perfect love casts out fear" [1 Jn 4:18; read 4:7-21]), it frees us to serve others (e.g., Gal 5:13; read 5:1-26).

JAMES 1:25b ... not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

1. forgetful [G1953, epile_smone_, from G1950: see 1:24]
2. effectual [G2041, ergon: work]. The idea is that the "doing" is done in such a way that it actually works (produces the desired result).
3. does [G4162, poie_sis]. Found only here. Directly related to "doer" [G4163, poie_te_s].
4. blessed. The implication is that the person who is only a student of the word or a person who has developed a set pattern of obedience to the word is not blessed by God. Blessing is for those people who live out the freedom provided by the abiding, implanted Word. This person is in tune with the revelation of God on a moment-by-moment basis. Read Psalm 1 for an OT picture that corresponds somewhat with this concept.

JAMES 1:26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his {own} heart, this man's religion is worthless.

1. religious [G2357, thre_skos] is found only here. Religion [G2356, thre_skeia] is found 4 times in the NT: Acts 26:5; Col 2:18; Jam 1:26, 27. A religious person is one who performs the duties of a given religion. These duties refer to the rituals of worship as well as following the moral code of the religion. For a Jew, the focus would be on worship, prayer, fasting, and giving and keeping the holiness code of conduct (ritual washing, etc.).
2. bridle his tongue. James mentions this important outcome of being a doer of the word so that we will match up the teaching in this section with his teaching elsewhere about this topic (cf. 1:19; 3:1-13; 4:2, 11-17; 5:9). Since the tongue is one of the most difficult things to control, James uses it as an example of our failure to truly perform the duties of our *religion*. Christianity is not

a religion focused on some conversion experience that took place somewhere in the past, or in the worship that took place last Sunday. Its focus is on an abiding relationship with God -- a relationship that impacts the activities of every moment of our lives.

3. deceives [G538, *apatao*_: to deceive]. Different word from that used above at 1:16 [G4105, *planao*_: to cause to wander] and 1:22 [G3884, *paralogizomai*: to reason falsely].
4. deceives his {own} heart [alla *apato_n kardian autou*]. The idea is probably referring to a self-deception of the deepest kind. It is not casual but deliberate and thorough. The person is totally convinced that everything is okay.
5. worthless [G3152, *mataios*: Acts 14:15; 1 Cor 3:20; 15:17; Titus 3:9; Jam 1:26; 1 Pet 1:18; [G3153, *mataiote_s*: Rom 8:20; Eph 4:17; 2 Pet 2:18]; [G3154, *mataioo*_: Rom 1:20]. Usually refers to people's vain or futile attempts at being religious.

JAMES 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of {our} God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

1. pure [G2513, *katharos*; clean, pure]. It is the pure in heart who will see God (Mt 5:8; cf. 1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22; Tit 1:15).
2. undefiled [G283, *amiantos*]. Found only 4 times in NT (Heb 7:26, 13:4; Jam 1:27; 1 Pet 1:4).
3. unstained [G784, *aspilos*]. Found only 4 times in NT (1 Tim 6:14; Jam 1:27; 1 Pet 1:19; 2 Pet 3:14).
4. pure, undefiled, unstained. James uses the language of Jewish ritual and pious practices but gives them an entirely different meaning. James will call us to a true cleansing and piety in 4:8-10. See also 2 Pet 3:14; 1 Tim 6:14; 1 Pet 1:19; cf. 1 Cor 5:8.
5. in the sight of God. Refers to God's viewpoint (e.g., His acceptance or rejection of worship and service). He sees all the worthless rituals, prayers, fasting, giving, etc. and sees them as filthiness and the remains of wickedness/malice (1:21). On the other hand, true acts of compassion done in His name, His wisdom and His power [the implanted word] are rated as pure and undefiled.
6. Father. The main use of this name is probably to underscore the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of humankind. The use of *Father* here is intended to teach at least two concepts: (a) widows and orphans are His children and we should share in His compassion for them, (b) He is our Father and we are to be transformed into His image and take on His character (compassion, etc.). We cannot do it on our own.
7. visit [*episkeptesthai* from G1980a *episkeptomai*]. Jesus used this same term in His contrast between the sheep and the goats (Mt 25:36, 43). Visiting widows and orphans in their distress is just one example of people who are doers of the word.
8. widows and orphans in their distress. The Bible contains many references to God's concern for those in distress (Ex 22:22-24; Dt 10:16-19; 14:28-29; 16:11-12; 24:17-22; 26:10-13; 27:19; Ps 68:5; 146:9; Isa 1:10-17; Jer 5:28; Ezk 22:7; Zech 7:9-10; Acts 6:1-6; 9:39; 1 Tim 5:3-16). The stranger and Levite are sometimes included in this list of people warranting God's special concern.
9. world [G2889, *kosmos*]. Refers to a system of evil that characterizes every aspect of human culture that is in opposition to God (cf. Jam 4:4). Paul uses *world* in this same way (1 Cor 1-3; 5:10; 11:32; Eph 2:2) and so does John (Jn 12:31; 15:18-25; 16:7-11; 17:14-16; 1 Jn 2:15-17). However, it is important to note that *world* may be used in a positive sense to represent all people ("For God so loved the world..." [Jn 3:16]). We are to keep ourselves unstained by the world (cf. Rom 12:1-3; 1 Cor 5:8).

JAMES, CHAPTER 2

JAMES 2:1 My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with {an attitude of} personal favoritism.

1. Scholars have trouble with the construction of this verse, not being certain how some of the words should be connected. The Greek arrangement is "Brothers of me not in personal-favoritism [one word] have you the faith in the Lord of us Jesus Christ the glory." However the underlying truth is obvious. There is a basic incompatibility between showing partiality and having faith in Jesus.

2. My brethren [TNIV: brothers and sisters]. James is not addressing a problem in the society of non-believers. This problem is within the Christian community.
3. Do not hold. James could have simply said, "stop showing favoritism" since he uses an imperative here. But the construction is more complicated. James wants us to see our faith as a living faith that results in proper conduct. Is faith compatible with partiality?
4. faith in. Some prefer "faith of" [KJV] or "the faith" but "faith in" is better (cf. Mk 11:22; Act 3:16; Gal 2:16, 20; Eph 3:12; Phil 3:9), since James wants us to compare relationships. How does our personal relationship with others match with our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ (His full title)? See comments on 1:1 for the importance on His full title.
5. personal favoritism [G4382, *proso_pole_mpsia*: partiality]. Found only four times in the NT (Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25, Jam 2:1). But see also Lk 20:21 and Gal 2:6 [*proso_pon_lambanei*], Acts 10:34 [G4381, *proso_pole_mpte_s*] and James 2:9 [G4380, *proso_pole_mpteo_s*]. It appears to be a distinctive Christian word created from "face" [G4383, *proso_pon*] and "receive" [G2983, *lambano_s*], literally "receiving of face" (cf. the phrase "accepting at face value"). It refers to focusing on the superficial (the outer surface) and not on the inner reality. "Respect of persons" (KJV) is too vague, even misleading (since all people should be respected!). See also Mt 22:16 and Mk 12:14 where G4383 is used with G991 (show) to indicate partiality. The same thought is expressed in the OT (e.g., Lev 19:15; Dt 1:17; 10:17; Ps 82:2; Prov 6:35; 18:5). "Snobbery" [NEB] is too limiting.
6. the glory [*te_s doxe_s*, from G1391, *doxa*: opinion, glory, honor, praise]. What does glory modify? Suggestions: "our glorious faith", "Lord of glory Jesus Christ" [KJV, RSV], "our Lord Jesus Christ the glory" [NEB], "our glorious Lord Jesus Christ" [NASB, NIV]. Probably the reason for the difficult arrangement of words results from James' desire that we see both a present and a future picture of our Lord. He is glorious now in that He reflects the glory of God (reputation, honor). *Glory* would remind his Jewish readers of the Hebrew *kabod* with its many physical manifestations of His presence in the OT (cf. Zech 2:5; 6:13, called *Shekinah* by Jewish rabbis). Being renewed in the image of God (1:4), we should not show partiality. But He is also glorious in the future when He comes to judge the world (contrast *judges* in 2:4). The anticipation of a coming judgment should shape our lives. We saw (above) that doubting is an insult to the character of God. Now add partiality! How could we possibly be impressed by the superficial "glory" of well-dressed people (see 2:2-4) when we have seen the glory of our Lord!

JAMES 2:2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

1. assembly [G4864, *synago_ge_s*]. This term is used in the NT for the Jewish synagogues. Why doesn't James use "church" [G1577, *ekkle_sia*]? Does James use the term simply because he is writing to Jews? Probably not. It is quite possible that James wants us to use assembly (gathering) in a broader sense (any gathering of believers, not just gathering for worship). Or perhaps he is thinking of another use of this term, i.e., gathering for judicial purposes. There is the possibility that James is referring to a trial that involves two people from very different social classes. The further description given in 2:3 makes it highly probable that this is not an assembling for worship, since it is not likely that some would sit for worship while others stand.
2. gold ring and dressed in fine clothes. We might assume that the man is rich, but James does not say so. Remember that James is focusing, not just on partiality, but on superficiality as well. The man may have the appearance of wealth and high social position, but he may be seeking to deceive.
3. clothing. For some reason, the KJV used three different words to translate the same Greek word: apparel, raiment (2:2), clothing (2:3). Our present society is so casual about dress, that it is hard to understand the extreme importance of clothing in ancient societies. For example, one could tell the difference between a Jew and a Samaritan by the way they dress, making "stripped him" a very important aspect of the Good Samaritan story (Lk 10:30). Clothing also was used to indicate social status. It is possible that here James is using "clothing" as a common denominator. (If so, then it is important that one English word is used.) We are the ones who add adjectives such as *fine* and *dirty*.
4. fine [G2986, *lampros*: lit. bright, shining]. Found here and in 2:3. KJV again chooses two different words (goodly, gay) for the same Greek word. James may be exaggerating a little to

make his point (remember that this is a "what if" situation). For example, this term was used for the clothing of Romans who held public office. It is quite possible that James wants us to use "gold ring" for the appearance of wealth and "fine clothing" for the appearance of high social status.

5. poor [G4434, pto_chos: beggarly, poor]. Found here and 2:5, 6. This word is used for beggars. In general it indicates people who are so poor that they cannot support themselves (cf. Mt 5:3); they must depend on others. In contrast to the person who has the appearance of wealth, this person is actually poor -- very poor.
6. dirty [G4508, rhuparos: filthy, dirty]. This word is closely related to filthiness [G4507b, rhupaira] in 1:21. By translating this word by *dirty* instead of by *filthy* makes it difficult to see the connection with 1:21. *Vile* (KJV) and *shabby* (NIV) are even worse. James uses the same picture (as at 1:21) but changes its meaning. At 1:21 *filthy clothes* represent the lack of purity. Here *filthy clothes* refers to appearance and not to reality! The man in dirty/filthy clothes may be of higher moral character than the man with fine clothes! Who can tell! We should honor people, not for what they wear (i.e., wealth and social position), but for who they are.

JAMES 2:3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good {place}," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"

1. pay special attention (one word) [epiblepse_te (to look on with favor) from G1914, epiblepo_]. Found only 3 times in NT (Lk 1:48, 9:38).
2. You sit here in a good place. It is possible that this should read: "You sit here, please" [RSV, NEB]. Kalo_s [G2573] translated *good place* is an adverb meaning *beautifully*. Although "in a good place" adds words to the original sentence, it probably reflects better what James is wanting to convey.
3. Stand over there. Stand, in deference to the socially important person and others (including the speaker) who are all seated.
4. sit down by my footstool. Literally: sit under my footstool. The person will be sitting lower than the speaker's footstool.

JAMES 2:4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

1. Setting. Now we may propose a setting. Although we cannot be certain, it appears that we should be picturing a court case handled by the local congregation. (A common practice for certain disputes allowed under Roman law.) The elders will be judging between these two men. But the superficial man has been asked to be seated among the judges while the other man must stand before the court or take a position at their feet.
2. have you not. Not an expression of doubt. The wording is such that the reader is expected to agree with the writer.
3. made distinctions [G1252, diakrino_: to distinguish, to judge]. Before the case has even started, the process is biased against the poor man. *Made distinctions* makes perfectly good sense here, but it misses an important connection. In 1:6, the word doubting is from this same word [diakrinomenos, from G1252 diakrino_: distinguish, judge]. It refers to one who is divided in mind and wavers between two opinions. James wants us to see again the double-minded person with two motives: to serve God and to serve worldly values.
4. among yourselves. What has happened is by some mutual agreement among all parties, probably not stated but assumed. They do it without even realizing what they are doing. How often we allow worldly values to determine actions of the church because we are not examining closely what we are doing in the light of the revelation of God. Perhaps even the poor man simply expects to be treated in this fashion.
5. judges [G2923, krite_s, from G2919, krino_]. *Distinctions* and *judges* come from the same Greek root. The use of words with the same root further emphasized the lack of equality before the law.
6. with. Better than "of" in KJV. They are not judging evil thoughts. They are the ones with evil thoughts.
7. motives [G1261, dialogismos: reasonings]. It could refer to their reasoning, not motives (NIV: thoughts). But most often these are connected. Evil thoughts produces evil motives.

JAMES 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world {to be} rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

1. The construction shows that an affirmative answer is expected.
2. promised to those who love Him. We need to start at the end of this verse so we understand the limitations of the statements here. The promises of God are only for those who love Him. This expression is exactly the same in the Greek as in 1:12. There His promise was the crown of life for those who persevere. Here it is heirs of the kingdom for the poor.
3. Listen. Another imperative. It is in the aorist tense (Get this message once and for all!) The message should be understood completely so that you do not need to learn it over and over again.
4. choose [exelexato, from G1586, ekleipo_]. James uses the language of covenant (Dt 4:37; 7:7; 14:2; Acts 13:17; 15:7; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 2:9) to show the seriousness of this matter. It is in the aorist tense.
5. the poor of this world. The early church consisted mostly of poor people -- poor in the eyes of this world, not in the eyes of God (Lk 4:18; 6:20; Mt 11:2-6). The poor are special in God's eyes (Dt 15; 16:3; 26:7; Prov 19:17; Ps 35:10). James mentioned widows and orphans above and now continues the idea by adding poor people to the list. There is nothing inherently blessed in being poor. However, the poor are more likely to admit their dependence upon God, look to Him for help, etc. Therefore, many poor people and only a few rich people will be heirs of the kingdom (cf. 1 Cor 1:26-29). Read again the story of the rich young ruler (Mt 19:16-30 = Mk 10:17-31 = Lk 18:18-30).
6. rich in faith. God has not chosen all the poor people. He chooses those who respond with a rich faith. Of course, the choice of the word *rich* to describe this faith is deliberate. They are the poor who are really rich. James is also preparing us for his rejection of a faith that lacks certain qualities (2:14-26).
7. heirs [G2818, kle_onomos] of the kingdom [G932, basileia]. The future (the NOT YET) aspects of the kingdom are in view. The same concepts are found in the use of *eternal life* (Mt 25:34, 46). Both have a NOW and a NOT YET aspect. Jesus also matches up poor with kingdom (Mt 5:3). The idea of inheriting the kingdom is also found in Mt 25:34; Lk 12:32; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal 5:21. Inheriting the kingdom is closely tied to salvation.

JAMES 2:6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?

1. dishonored [G818, atimazo_]. God chose them. You dishonor them!
2. poor, rich. *Poor* is singular, *rich* is plural. *Rich* here indicates a class of people. James avoided the term *rich* in 2:3 to make a point about superficial values. Now, James describes a typical behavior of rich people.
3. oppress [G2616a, katadunasteuo_]. This is a strong term, used often in the LXX to describe brutal treatment of others (e.g., Ezek 22:29; Zech 7:9-10).
4. drag [G1670, helko_]. It can simply mean draw or attract (John 6:44; 12:32), but it can be used to literally drag a person (Acts 16:19; 21:30). It is not the usual term for arresting a person. James probably used it to indicate an additional, deliberate humiliation of the poor.
5. personally. Should be "they" but the emphasis is correct. The picture is of a rich person who knows the circumstances of the poor people, yet still callously takes them to court -- with the probable worsening of the conditions for the poor person.

JAMES 2:7 Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?

1. blaspheme [G987, blasphem_ meo_]. This word can be used for slandering of others [NIV], but when used for God, *blaspheme* [KJV, NASB, RSV] is probably the better translation.
2. fair [G2570, kalos: beautiful]. *Fair* seems too mild to me. Other possibilities are noble [NIV], worthy [KJV], honorable [RSV, NEB], glorious [Phillips].
3. called [epikaleisthai from G1941, epikaleo_ which is from G2564, kaleo_] a term used often for covenant. It is in the aorist tense, so it probably refers to a point in time (e.g., conversion, baptism). People were "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48).
4. you have been called. "Called upon you" would probably be better. This is an OT concept: the idea of taking on the name of another in marriage, naming children, adoption, etc. The meaning

here goes far beyond the idea that we are called "Christians" -- a title using the name *Christ*. It refers to a legal relationship (wife, son, daughter, slave, etc. [Gen 48:16; Isa 4:1]). We are His (Dt 28:10; 2 Chr 7:14; Amos 9:12; Isa 43:7; Jer 14:9).

5. We are left with several questions. In what ways is blasphemy happening? Some scholars think that these rich people are especially oppressing the poor because they are Christians. Perhaps they are even cursing the name of Jesus during the trial. All this may be true, but I think that James would have us look closer to home. He is probably saying that mistreatment of people who bear the name of Jesus is a form of blasphemy. Any one of us may be guilty!

JAMES 2:8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," (Lev 19:18) you are doing well.

1. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" is what I call a "first priority" commandment. All other commandments are subordinate to first priority commandments. The other two love commandments (love God, love Christians [Jn 13:34]) are also first priority commandments (Dt 6:4-5; Mt 22:36-40; Mk 12:28-34; Lk 10:25-28; cf. Mt 19:19). Are there any other "first priority" commandments? Yes! For example, check out the three summary statements in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:48; 6:33; 7:12) and Heb 12:14.
2. fulfilling. When we obey "first priority" commandments, we are fulfilling all the rest of the law. This concept is supported elsewhere by Jesus (Mt 7:12; 22:40) and Paul (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:13-14; 6:2). "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled {the} law ... if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of {the} law" (Rom 13:8-10). "... but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the {statement}, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal 5:13-14). "Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).
3. royal [G937, basilikos]. The Greek word shows it is related to kingdom (2:5). It is kingdom law. "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" (Mt 22:40). It is royal law because it is what the King [Jesus] wants. It is also royal law because it shows us how we should live since we are in the royal family. The "Law and the Prophets" are given to enhance the love relationship between God and us among ourselves. The Law is not some arbitrary set of hoops we must jump through to make it into heaven. It is designed to show either the success or failure in our response to the God who is Holy Love.
4. well [kalo_s]. Perhaps *right* [NIV] would be better in contrast to committing sin in 2:9.

JAMES 2:9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin {and} are convicted by the law as transgressors.

1. partiality [G4380, proso_pole_mpteo_]. Directly connected to personal favoritism [G4382, proso_pole_mpsia] found in 2:1 tying these two passages together.
2. committing [lit. work]. same as "achieve" in 1:20.
3. sin. James will allow no excuse for showing partiality. It is sin!
4. convicted by the law. There are plenty of commandments in the law that reflect the proper relationship to others (e.g. Dt 1:17). These commandments clearly make partiality a sin.
5. law. Some scholars think that "law" here is the royal law presented in 2:8, but I don't think so.
6. transgressors [G3848, parabate_s]. It refers to people who break the law. Found only 5 times in the NT (Rom 2:25, 27; Gal 2:18, James 2:9, 11). But see *transgressions* [G3845, parabaino_: Mt 15:3] and [G3847, parabasis: Rom 2:23; 4:15; 5:14; Gal 3:19; 1 Tim 2:14; Heb 2:2; 9:15].

JAMES 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one {point}, he has become guilty of all.

1. For. Shows this is a continuation of the above.
2. keeps the whole law. James presents a hypothetical case. The second half of the sentence shows how improbable that is.
3. whole law. The Law can be thought of as a unit, since it is an expression of the will of God. This unitary concept is expressed in Mt 5:18-19; Gal 5:3.
4. stumbles [G4417, ptaio_]. Found only 5 times in NT (James 2:10; 3:2, 2; 2 Pet 1:10; Rom 11:11). It is important to realize that James is not picturing people who deliberately violate the

Law, but a person who is trying hard to keep the Law. At 3:2, James says that we all stumble in many ways, but then goes on to consider a perfect person who never stumbles. Peter says that it is possible to never stumble (2 Peter 1:10). So which view is the right one? They both are. They are referring to two different approaches to the Law.

5. guilty of all. When the Law is seen as a single unit, then any violation, no matter how small is the breaking of the Law.

JAMES 2:11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," (Ex 20:14) also said, "Do not commit murder" (Ex 20:13). Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

1. James gives an obvious example of the point he is making in 2:10. Break the Law, you are a transgressor (criminal, lawbreaker). You are considered a transgressor regardless of which law you break. All it takes is one. There is a very important concept behind this seemingly simple idea. We cannot make up for breaking one commandment by doing "better" somehow in others. The whole idea of using a balance scale to determine who gets into heaven is totally unbiblical. But it is the picture most people have. They reason that a few minor sins here and there don't really matter because they are more than balanced by all the good deeds done.
2. A more biblical picture of righteousness is that we start out life with a flask full of water (righteousness). One act of unrighteousness, no matter how minor, is like spilling some of the water out of the flask. Now, since we are required to be righteous "24/7", there is no way to work overtime and earn some righteousness to bring the flask back to full. The problem is that it take a full flask of righteousness to get into heaven. How can I possibly make it!

JAMES 2:12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by {the} law of liberty.

1. so. It appears twice to show that both speaking and acting are of equal importance. The NIV leaves out "so" both times!
2. so speak and so act. The intent of James is that we keep these in balance. What we say doesn't mean anything if it is not matched by what we do.
3. judged. Here is the crucial point. It is really our choice. Do I really want to be judged by the Law (i.e., the written code) where the violation of a single commandment makes me a transgressor?
4. law of liberty. We return to this all-important idea (see 1:25). but now we know more about it. It is the perfect law, the royal law, the kingdom law. It is the law that sets me free. Jesus gives us the sense of what that means in a discussion with Peter. "When they came to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma {tax} came to Peter and said, 'Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma {tax}?' He said, 'Yes.' And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, 'What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?' When Peter said, 'From strangers,' Jesus said to him, 'Then the sons are exempt'" (Matt 17:24-26).
5. exempt [G1658 *eleutheros*: free] is the source of the word used for liberty here in James [G1657, *elutheria*: freedom, liberty].
6. sons. *Son* is used often in the NT to represent taking on the likeness of the Father. For example, that is the way it is used in Matt 5:9, 43-48; Lk 6:31-36. Also in Jn 12:36, Jesus speaks of *sons of light*. At another time, Jesus used a different picture to teach the same truth. "You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and {that} your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it {hated} you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you" (John 15:14-19).
7. The contrast between slave and friend is the picture of keeping the Law vs. keeping His word ("for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you"). A new relationship has been established. We are children of God and "whatever you ask of the Father"

He will give us. However, there is a down side to this new relationship. We now "look like" Jesus and the world hates us.

8. James wants us to picture Jewish Law as something that enslaves -- it takes over almost every aspect of your life. The *implanted word* sets us free! It sets us free because the focus of "the law of liberty" is in a new relationship. The implanted word is actually the Holy Spirit abiding, guiding, cleansing, empowering, etc. (see John 14-16). But we will still be judged, no longer by every small detail of the Jewish Law, but by relationships ("This I command you, that you love one another"). We are now children of God. Remember the passages that tell us we are being transformed into the image of His Son, Jesus (e.g., 2 Cor 3:17-18; 1 Jn 3:1-3). We will be judged by the degree our lives are aligned with the character of God. Some would see the new law of liberty as a licence to break a few rules and know that "Daddy" will forgive them. (Paul warns us about such an attitude in chapter 5 of Galatians.) What an awful way to picture our relationship with the Father. Instead we will be judged by a higher standard. For example, the Law will condemn those who do not love their neighbor, but we will be judged by our attitudes towards our enemies. God loves them; therefore we his children must love them (see Mt 5:43-48). In fact, Jesus concludes this first section of the Sermon on the Mount, with a "first Priority" Commandment: "Therefore, you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). The word "perfect" there is the same Greek word as "perfect" in James 1:4, 17, 25; 3:2. [G5046, teleios].
9. speak and act. Remember these commands at the beginning of our sentence? Our speech and actions must reflect "the image of God" in us. Now perhaps you understand why I said way back in 1:5 that the prayer for wisdom was a prayer that we might have the image of God in us.

JAMES 2:13 For judgment {will be} merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

1. judgment. refers to the final judgment.
2. mercy. James now reminds us of a fundamental teaching of Jesus. It is found in one of the beatitudes: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy" (Mt 5:7). This is "a member" of one of the triads in the beatitudes which I call "righteousness in action" and includes the pure in heart and the peacemakers. The description of these people includes receiving mercy, seeing God and being called children of God (Mt 5:7-9). Jesus elsewhere makes it clear that there is no mercy for those who do not show mercy (Mt 6:12-15; 18:21-35). God is merciful (Ex 34:5-7; Num 14:17-19; Dt 4:31; Neh 9:16-21; Ps 86:14-17; 103:6-14; Jonah 4:2, 11); we must imitate Him!
3. mercy triumphs over judgment. James uses "mercy" instead of "merciful person" and makes triumphs in the present tense. These indicate that he wants us to see a universal truth. Mercy triumphed at the cross. It triumphs in the salvation of a sinner (Lk 18:9-14), and it will triumph in our relationships if we will let it (Lk 6:27-38). It is interesting that John introduced this same concept but uses love instead of mercy: "no fear in love... confidence in the day of judgment..." (1 John 4:15-19). There are a number of indicators that God wanted more than a legal response from the people (Jer 9:26; Hos 6:4-6; Mic 6:6-8; Mt 5:7; 12:7; 25:31-46).

JAMES 2:14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?

1. my brethren [brothers and sisters]. This indicates a new topic. James now expands a topic he introduced in 1:19-27. We are to be doers of the word. This section also draws upon the conclusions in 2:8-13 where loving our neighbor is one of the key ideas.
2. What use it? The structure of the sentence expects a negative reply. No use at all!
3. says he has faith. What follows shows that this claim is false.
4. that faith (NIV: such faith). The presence of the article on the second "faith" with none on the first shows it to be a spurious faith.
5. works [G2041, ergon]. Used in 2:14, 17, 18[3x], 20, 21 22[2x], 24, 25, 26. True faith is relational. It is one element in the interaction of a transformed life with a holy, loving God. It involves trusting God with our lives and living in obedience to Him. It cannot simply be intellectual. A confession of piety and ritual acts of piety are useless unless there are also

actions. (See Mt 7:15-27; cf. 5:16; Lk 3:7-14; Rom 1:5; 2:6-8; 6:17-18; 1 Cor. 13:2; 15:58; 2 Cor 10:5-6; Gal 6:4-6).

6. save him. It is in the aorist tense. This refers to final salvation. Our eternal destiny will be determined by an ongoing faith that involves works. These works will not earn us heaven, but these works are an expression of the very presence of God in our lives.

JAMES 2:15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,

1. James presents a hypothetical case. However, it is such an obvious example of proper action that no one can miss it. Also, this situation is simple. James is thinking of someone within the community of believers. He is not asking the readers to solve all the problems of poverty in their society. He is talking about a local congregation that claims to be the family of God.
2. without clothing [G1131, *gumnos*]. Literally naked, but can mean scarcely or poorly clad. The idea here is probably inadequate clothing (could mean "in rags" or simply missing the outer garment). They need help!
3. daily [G2184, *ephe moeros*] food [G5160, *trophe*]. Not even enough food for today. What will tomorrow be like!

JAMES 2:16 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?

1. Go in peace. A standard Hebrew farewell (cf. Gen 26:29; Jdg 18:6; 1 Sam 1:17; 20:42; 29:7; Mk 5:34; Lk 7:50; Acts 16:36). It is in the form of a blessing using the important Hebrew word *Shalom* (more than peace but well-being, good life, etc.). It also expresses the end of an encounter.
2. be warmed and be filled. It is present tense, i.e., continuous action. This is an admission that the two needs expressed in the previous verse have been recognized. However, this person chose only to extend the blessing inherent in the farewell to include a prayer that these needs will be met. *Warmed* means "warmed from clothing" and *be filled* means "to satisfy hunger."
3. do not give. The hypothetical situation James proposed assumes that the person is able to assist the needy person. What good is a prayer when you could supply the need.
4. what use is that? See 2:14. Repeating this expression frames (an *inclusio*) the passage (2:14-16).

JAMES 2:17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, {being} by itself.

1. James probably starts a new section here.
2. dead [G3498, *nekros*]. Same as in 2:26 (twice there). This key thought frames this passage (2:17-26).
3. faith ... by itself. Again James is picturing an incomplete faith. He is probably anticipating the body/spirit picture in 2:26. The body *by itself*....

JAMES 2:18 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."

1. someone may say. The phrase normally is used to indicate a hostile participant in a discussion. But who is that person? A usual response would be that the person is hostile to the position taken by James. But that does not appear to be the case here. The "You" here continues on through the next several verses and is used for the person who thinks that faith without works is sufficient for salvation. Therefore the "someone" is the same as the "I" and is a person agreeing with James.
2. You have faith, and I have works. The wording here appears to project the idea that these two are like gifts from God. Some people have faith, others have works. It is assumed that not everyone is expected to have works.
3. Show me your faith without the works. But such an idea is immediately dismissed. How can you even know that you have faith if there is no visible action that proceeds out of it? There is no way to demonstrate the reality of such a "faith."
4. I will show you my faith by my works. The living faith that is ongoing in a relationship with God (the implanted word) produces fruit and works. Works is an integral part of "faith", and it is not a real "faith" unless "works" is an ingredient.

JAMES 2:19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

1. God is one. This is the central element in the Shema, which is quoted twice each day by the pious Jews. "Hear, O Israel, YHWH our God, YHWH is one" (Dt 6:4).
2. You do well. The belief that God is one is an essential confession for Christians. But it is not enough.
3. the demons also believe. Should be demons [G1140, daimonion], not "devils" (KJV); there are many demons but only one devil. The demons are well aware of truth of the Shema, but such knowledge does not save them.
4. shudder [G5425, phrisso_]. Found only here. It refers to a shudder as a result of fear. This fear shows that the demons are fully convinced (and convicted?) that God is One.

JAMES 2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

1. foolish [G2756, kenos: empty]. It can be translated *empty-handed*. Empty in head, heart, and hand. It refers to both moral error and doctrinal error.
2. useless [G692, argos: inactive, idle, unproductive, sterile]. It is the negative form of work [G2041, ergon] "not at work." "Dead" (KJV) is not correct. But why doesn't James use "dead" here as he does in 2:17 and 2:20? I think it is because some people insisted that "this faith" is alive and is accomplishing its intended goal (final salvation). James sees such thinking as willful ignorance and seeks to correct it by strong language ("you foolish fellow"), hoping to reveal a serious moral error involving their eternal destiny.
3. willing to recognize. James anticipates that they are not willing, so he uses this strong language. He will now give two examples to make his point, but perhaps it will do no good.

JAMES 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

1. our father [G3962, pater]. This is further evidence that the intended readers are Jewish Christians. For these people, some who may be resisting this teaching, James chose the finest example he can find. Surely they are willing to take time to seriously consider Abraham's life.
2. justified [G1344, dikaloo_]. NIV has "considered righteous" Its standard meaning is "to declare righteous".
3. when he offered up ... James surprises us here. The expected reference to Abraham being declared righteous would be Gen 15:6, but James refers to an account perhaps 30 years later! In the earlier account Abram/Abraham had been promised a son years before and still did not have one. "And Abram said, 'Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.' Then behold, the word of YHWH came to him, saying, 'This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.' And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants [seed] be.' Then he believed in YHWH; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:3-6).

In the later account, Abraham had been told to take his son to Mt. Moriah and to sacrifice him there. Abraham obeys but is stopped as he raises the knife. "He [the angel of YHWH] said, 'Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me'" (Gen 22:12).

Why does James use this passage since *righteous/justify* does not appear in it? James saw in the statement "for now I know that you fear God" a completing of the declaration of righteousness years before.

JAMES 2:22 You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

1. faith. What is the "faith" that James has in mind here? I think he has already stated it in 2:19: belief that God is one. For his Jewish readers, Abraham (in one sense) was the first person to really believe that there was only one God. The first monotheist. Not the first one with a

"demon faith" but the first one whose entire life was committed to that reality and the implications of that truth. He practiced that faith.

2. works [G2041, ergon]. The NASB brings out the force of James using "work" three times in this one verse.
3. working [G4903, sunergeo_: working together]. Here the imperfect tense is used rather than just the present. The present tense gives us the sense of continuous action. The imperfect adds an element to it. It is faith working together with works time and time again. The "works" is plural, so James is thinking of a lifestyle.
3. perfected [G5048, teleioo_] directing us back to 1:4, 17, 25 where this idea is expressed in such important ways. It is hard to be able to grasp exactly the meaning James wants us to get (NIV, ESV: completed; NRSV: brought to completion; NEB: the integrity of his faith was fully proved). *Perfected* is probably better here, because it can hold the "already" (NOW) and the "future" (Not Yet) together. For Abraham it was not that something was missing in his faith. His faith was not useless (2:20), and it was not "completed" by the act of offering his son. But it was perfect in that his faith was not a dead faith (2:17), a demon faith (2:19) but an active faith (a faith at work). The NEB brings out some of this idea. The faith that takes us all the way to heaven is a faith with an ongoing commitment to active expression, in contrast to a one-time confession of belief. A body without breath (2:26 below) is not alive and active; it is dead.

JAMES 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," (Gen 15:6) and he was called the friend of God (Is 41:8).

1. Scripture. Now James finally quotes the passage that contains the statement regarding justify/righteous.
2. fulfilled [G4137, ple_roo_]. Faith is to works as promise is to fulfillment. James sees that supreme testing of Abraham's faith (in being asked to sacrifice his son) as the fulfillment of the statement made some thirty years before. When "Abraham believed God" he did not simply have a "head faith" (a "demon faith"), his faith included his heart trusting and his will obeying.
3. reckoned [G3049, logizomai]. This word has the idea of equivalence: "When *faith* is found then write down *righteous*" (faith = righteousness). The typical picture many take from this word then would be writing it down in a book (like an account book) as some completed account (e.g., "paid in full"). Some scholars like to stress that Abraham was *declared* righteous not *made* righteous. However, James sees the original statement in Gen 15:6 more like a starting point of a journey not as an arrival at a destination.
4. righteousness [G1343, dikaiosune_] from the same word-group as "justified" in 2:21.
5. called a friend of God. *Friend* in both Hebrew and Greek includes both companionship and love. Why did James add this statement to the other? It is a paraphrase of Isaiah 41:8 and 2 Chr 20:7. But compare Gen 18:16-19 where this friendship is implied and righteousness is seen as something we do. James does not see "righteousness" as something to be written in a book but as a real relationship. Abraham is not pictured as a sinner who God had declared righteous because of some moment of belief -- a person who actually remains a sinner. No! Abraham has entered into a friendship. Remember the way I used *friend* in 2:12 above (discussing "the law of liberty") with the quotation from John 15:14-19? Jesus is declaring that the apostles are friends not slaves. We are not just "freed" slaves. We have entered into a transforming relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So, we can now be called friends, children, bride, fellow-workers, etc.

JAMES 2:24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

1. James arrives at this simple conclusion. In regard to Abraham, he is saying that if there was no more to Abraham's life than the one statement in Gen 15:6, it would be meaningless. This story must be paired with the account of the willingness to sacrifice Isaac as well as all the **acts of faith** in between.
2. a man. The story of Abraham is now generalized to include all of us. Faith confessions alone will not save us. Faith that is not being expressed in works is not a true faith.

JAMES 2:25 In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

1. It is obvious that James has now paired the faith of Abraham with the faith of a person that differs from him in almost every way. Rahab is a Gentile, woman, harlot, a resident of a city under the curse of God, etc. During the thirty year span from Genesis 15 to 22, the faith of Abraham was tested many times in very difficult circumstances. Rahab shared the belief of many people in Jericho that YHWH had given Israel the land. They had heard of what had happened in Egypt. They believed to such an extent that their "hearts melted and no longer courage remained in any man" (Josh 2:11; read 2:1-21; 6:17, 23, 25; Heb 11:31). So, for Rahab (unlike Abraham) the "faith" part was easy, and it is not even mentioned here by James. How was she justified? She was justified because she acted upon her faith. She risked her life by saving the messengers and casting her lot with Israel.
2. What is the lesson from the contrast between Abraham and Rahab? Faith is true faith when it is being acted upon. It doesn't take years of faith struggles to enter into relationship with God. The relationship begins and continues from the first moment faith is "perfect" (i.e., affirmation of truth along with trusting and obeying God). None of these three elements may be missing.

JAMES 2:26 For just as the body without {the} spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

1. dead. Same term as in 2:17.
2. without spirit is dead. Both the Hebrew and the Greek word for *spirit* are also the word for *air* and *breath*. Both meanings of the word fit well in this discussion. And James probably expected us to use both pictures. When the spirit leaves the body, the body is no longer alive. Without air a body dies.

EXCURSUS #3. PAUL AND JAMES ON JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS

There is a need to address the concern of many people regarding the different viewpoints of Paul and James on the subject of *justification by works*.

Paul writes extensively on this subject (Romans 3:19-31; 4 (all); 11:5-6; Gal 2:15-21; Eph 2:1-10). Here are some of the more significant verses.

"Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law {comes} the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:19-20). "Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (Romans 3:27-28). "Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified" (Gal 2:16). "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Eph 2:8-10).

As you can see from these verses, When Paul writes about being justified by works, he means that righteousness comes through the works of the Law (rituals, offering, commandments, etc.). Paul makes it clear that this is impossible (Gal 3:21). It was not even the purpose of the Law to make us righteous, because from the Law comes the knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20). It shows us our need, it does not provide the remedy. Jesus is the remedy.

Paul is referring to a type of work that earns merit. But the works of the Law do not earn any merit. No one will be able to boast that they earned their way to heaven.

James, on the other hand, is thinking of a very different kind of work. He has already dispelled the notion that we can earn our way to heaven. By stumbling over one small aspect of the Law, we become transgressors (James 2:10).

Works for James are the actions of those who abide by the law of liberty. These are works of love, compassion, mercy, etc. The life of faith is being a doer of the word (James 1:22). And this word is not the rigid code of the Law but the implanted word (1:21, God Himself!) directing and empowering our lives. If we have such a relationship, then our actions will be in line with His character. God is merciful. Therefore we will be merciful (James 2:13). Not because it is commanded in the Law, but because God is transforming our nature into His nature by His Presence. Works are the natural (by nature) expression of a faith-love-hope relationship with God.

Concerning faith, Paul thinks mostly of the focus of faith: Christ and His saving work for us. James thinks mostly of the expression of faith: the character of Christ as expressed in mercy, etc. to others.

JAMES, CHAPTER 3

JAMES 3:1 Let not many {of you} become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

1. my brethren. James often uses this phrase to introduce a new subject (speech). But James has already briefly mentioned this topic (1:19, 26).
2. many. It appears that there were many people wanting to be teachers. Teachers are one of the gifts God gives the church (1 Cor 12:28; Rom 12:6-7; Eph 4:11-16). But Satan also gives this same "gift" in the form of false prophets and teachers (1 Tim 1:3-7; 4:1-3; 2 Tim 4:3-4; Titus 1:9-11; 2 Pet 2:1-3). James is not calling these people messengers of Satan. However, sincere believers may be used by Satan, especially when they are not serving in the place of their calling and giftedness. There is grave danger when teaching in the church is not anointed and directed by the Holy Spirit (Mt 23:8; Acts 15:24).
3. we. James identifies himself as a teacher.
4. judgment [G2917, kríma: the decision of a judge]. Do not think of *judgment* as a bad thing. This term is actually neutral. Everyone (both the good and the bad) must face judgment. Some will be honored, etc.
5. stricter. The application of standards used in judgment vary according to the individual. For example, a person is to be a doer of the word (1:22). But the expectation will vary depending on the amount of *the word* the person has received. We are to walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7), but everyone has a different amount of light as well as varying amounts of light on different subjects. But *stricter* here probably refers mostly to the act and content of teaching. Since incorrect instruction can have devastating results, the teacher will be judged more strictly.
6. knowing. Here is the irony. Teachers called and gifted by God know that it is scary to be a teacher. Teachers should know enough to remember the condemnation by Jesus of the teachers of the law ["lawyers"] (Lk 11:45-52; cf. Mt 23:1-33; Mk 12:40; Lk 20:47). Also see 1 & 2 Peter and Jude. They should also remember that every casual word is subject to judgment (Mt 12:33-37; Eph 4:29; 5:4; Col 3:8). There is also the concept of more light equals more responsibility (Amos 3:2; Mk 12:38-40; Lk 12:48; James 4:17).

JAMES 3:2 For we all stumble in many {ways}. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

1. stumbles [G4417, ptaio_]. James has already used this word in 2:10 (see there for some details). Some people see *stumble* as just another word for *sin*. But if James had meant for us to read *sin* here, why didn't he use that word? He doesn't hesitate to use *sin* elsewhere in this book (1:15; 2:9; 4:17; 5:15-16).
2. If anyone does not stumble in what he says. Many people consider this statement to be a hypothetical case which never really happens. For them, it is just an ideal we are to strive for but we will never attain. They treat the Sermon on the Mount in the same way. Didn't James start this section by saying that we all stumble in many ways? However, Peter says that it is possible to never stumble (2 Peter 1:10). So which view is the right one? They both are. They are using different categories of meaning for the word *stumble*. John deals with these various categories in more detail (see 1 John).

- a. "All stumble in many ways" refers us back to the way James used it at 2:10. When our attitudes and actions are measured by the Law of God [God's standard], then everyone stumbles, fails, sins, etc. many times and in many ways. Under this standard we fail even when we don't even know it. (That is why we should choose the Law of Liberty to be the standard of measurement.)
- b. "Does not stumble" refers to a pattern of life, not to a single incident. We are experiencing a transforming relationship on a moment by moment basis. It is "impossible" for such people to be living a stumbling existence.
3. perfect. We must stay with James' usage of this term throughout this book. It is not absolute perfection. It is the life of trustful dependence on God and others. It is a life ready for heaven.
4. able to bridle the whole body as well. The obvious meaning here cannot be true. James cannot mean that we can control the whole body by controlling our tongue. That simply doesn't make sense. I could take a vow of silence or even cut out my tongue. Neither of these actions would insure that my body would not stumble. Jesus never meant that we should cut off hands and feet or pluck out eyes (Mt 5:29-30; 18:7-9). I think James is saying that if we have found the "secret" to controlling the tongue, that same "secret" works for every aspect of our lives. Why does James choose the tongue then? Why didn't he choose something like sexual impulses? There are at least two reasons: (a) it is so easy to stumble with the tongue - often it just comes out before we can even think about what we are saying ("a slip of the tongue"), and (b) speech is multifaceted in the many ways it can be evil and in the intensity of the evil it can do. "Sticks and stone may break my bones, but words..." is a defensive response to being deeply wounded by something said by someone. It is clearly not true!

JAMES 3:3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.

JAMES 3:4 Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.

1. Again the most obvious application of these two illustrations (bits and rudders) is that controlling the tongue gives control over the whole body. But a look at 3:5 shows that James is not going in that direction with these illustrations. James wants to impress us with the truth that small actions can have enormous effects. He wants us to realize the tremendous influence our speech can have, either for good or evil. Remember, James is still thinking of teachers (3:1). Their words can have a great impact on actions -- both their own and others.

JAMES 3:5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and {yet} it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

1. Why doesn't James make the obvious application: bits control horses, rudders control ships, tongues control bodies? No, he takes the discussion in a very different direction!
2. great boasts [megala auchei]. Instead of controlling the body, the tongue makes great boasts. So James is thinking of *influence* not *control*. In the NT, boasting is generally viewed as wrong unless we are boasting about Jesus.
3. small fire, great forest. In fact, this influence can start actions that are quickly out of control! One spark can burn down an entire forest.

JAMES 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, the {very} world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of {our} life, and is set on fire by hell.

1. a fire. James continues with the picture of a forest fire. He wants to emphasize the ability of fire to spread rapidly and to quickly be out of control.
2. world [G2889, kosmos]. James uses this term four other times (1:27; 2:5; 4:4, 4). In at least three of these references *world* is seen as hostile towards God.
3. world of iniquity [G93, adikia]. The fundamental characteristics of iniquity or evil sets this "world" apart from God's world. The idea here is that speech is the most obvious indicator of the presence of the evil world in the inner being of the person (cf. Mk 7:14-23).
4. members. Here it means the various parts of the physical body.

5. body [G4983, so_ma]. Body, not person (NIV). But NIV is probably correct in its interpretation. Body here probably represents the entire person.
6. defiles the entire body. Now we must take time to interpret, since it does make sense that the physical tongue can defile the physical body. What does James picture with the use of *tongue* here? The tongue is the main vehicle for the expression of the "truths" we affirm. These truths impact our actions. They actually govern the way we live, i.e., these "truths" defile our entire person.
7. course of life. NIV adds "his" to "life" and NASB adds "our" to "lives" but it is best to leave it simply as *course of life*. It is likely that James would rather that we consider its effects on every aspect of life -- ours as well as others we impact. In the same way that fire spreads throughout the entire forest, so these "truths" defile the very course of our lives and the lives of others.
8. hell [G1067, geenna: gehenna]. Used only here and by Jesus in the Gospels. It is the symbolic name for the final place of punishment of the ungodly. Finally, James identifies the source of the fire (the lies that are lived out as truth). They are from Satan (pictured here by the symbol of hell).

JAMES 3:7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

JAMES 3:8 But no one can tame the tongue; {it is} a restless evil {and} full of deadly poison.

1. tamed. Some people are bothered by the fact that many animals have not been tamed. James is not trying to establish some principle that every animal can be tamed. Rather, he is impressed by the fact that so many different "wild" things can come under the influence of humans.
2. is tamed [present tense] and has been tamed [perfect tense]. He sees it as an ongoing process. Some species of animals have already been tamed [perfect tense] and some are in the process of being tamed [present tense].
3. No one can tame the tongue. James wants us to stop and consider, if humans can tame a tiger, why can't they tame the tongue? However, to make sure we get it right, he gives us the reason.
4. restless [G182, akatastatos: unstable] evil. See *disorder* at 3:16. Not "unruly" (KJV). *Evil* is the sense of doing harm. James probably is picturing some animal that has not yet been tamed and also one that is dangerous (e.g., crocodile).
5. full of deadly poison. It kills whatever it contacts, like a serpent injecting venom.
6. The Bible has lots to say about the evils of the tongue (Psa 52:2; 141:3; Prov 10:18-21; 12:18; 13:3; 14:23; 17:27; 21:23; 26:20-22; Ec 5:2-3; Mt 12:33-37; 26:73; Lk 4:22; Eph 4:15, 29-31; Col 4:6; 1 Tim 5:13; Titus 2:8).

JAMES 3:9 With it we bless {our} Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

JAMES 3:10 from the same mouth come {both} blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

1. bless and curse. James returns to one of his major themes, expressed as "double-minded, unstable in all his ways" in 1:8. Note, for example, that "unstable" in 1:8 is the same Greek word as "restless" in 3:8 above and "disorder" in 3:16. This double-minded person blesses and curses the same object.
2. likeness of God. James uncovers the inconsistency of believing that we can curse other people and still bless God (all out of the same mouth). To curse them is to curse God since they were made in His likeness.
3. My brethren. James makes sure the reader knows he is talking about believers.
4. ought [G3784, opheilo_: to owe] not to be. This "ought" is not something that it would be nice if we would do it. It is an obligation. It must not be this way!

JAMES 3:11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening {both} fresh and bitter {water}?

JAMES 3:12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor {can} salt water produce fresh.

1. James follows up this "divine ought" with illustrations from nature.
2. A fig tree cannot produce olives. A vine cannot produce figs. A fountain cannot send out both fresh and bitter water at the same time.

3. Conclusion. James expects us at this point to conclude that a Christian cannot continue the double-minded life. What is the solution? Wisdom from God, which we were told at the beginning of this book to seek (1:5). James will now discuss wisdom in more detail.

JAMES 3:13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

1. wise [G4680, sophos], wisdom [G4678, sophia]. James introduced the subject of wisdom back at 1:5. This section is the "pivot" or "hinge" of the book. Sophos was a technical term for teachers, scribes, rabbis, so James has not left the discussion of those people who want to be teachers. However, it is broadened to include more people. Wisdom for the Jew was more moral than intellectual. It is making right choices that result in good conduct -- knowing how to live. And such a life starts with God: "The fear of YHWH is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Prov 9:10; cf. Job 28:28; Psa 111:10; Prov 1:7). I have tried to make the point that the wisdom we are to seek is that which is associated with the image of God. Wisdom is wanting to think like Him, act like Him and be like Him. We should want the character of God. See notes on 1:4-5; 2:12.
2. understanding [G1990, episte_mōn], personal acquaintance, experience. Found only here, but the related term [G1987 epistamai] is found 14 times in the NT. *Understanding* is used to describe experts -- people who have special knowledge or training. Wisdom and understanding are linked often in Scripture (e.g. see Prov 9:10 quoted above and Deut 1:13-15; 4:6; Dan 5:12).
3. show. We might think that the way to show wisdom is by what we say -- impressing people with our comments on how to live. Instead, we must let the way we live show that we have wisdom. It is not orthodoxy (right doctrine), but orthopraxis (right living) that determines the presence of true wisdom.
4. behavior [G391, anastrophe_]. "Conversation" (KJV) meant behavior, conduct, way of life, etc. when the KJV was written.
5. deeds [G2041, ergon: work]. Same as "work" elsewhere in this book.
6. gentleness [G4240, prautes: meekness]. NIV has *humility* which is a poor translation. Meekness is the subject of the third beatitude (Mt 5:5) and among the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) and found elsewhere (Gal 6:1; Eph 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25; Titus 3:2; 1 Pet 3:15). It is not passive acceptance but involves the deliberate choice to be under authority. It is not weakness, but strength under control. I prefer *meekness* as the translation of this word. However, *gentleness* is acceptable, especially if it is used in the sense of gentling a wild animal (horse, dog, etc.) to the point where it is under control and wants to please its master. Other references include Num 12:3; Mt 11:29; 21:5; 2 Cor 10:1; Gal 6:1; Eph 4:2; 2 Tim 2:25; Titus 3:2; James 1:21; 1 Pet 3:15).
7. gentleness of wisdom. Key to having wisdom is the attitude of accepting and desiring authority. Wise people know that they need God to be sovereign over them. They also readily accept the other authorities over them that God has given to others.

JAMES 3:14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

1. James is probably addressing a problem that existed in the community of believers.
2. bitter [G4089, pikros]. Found only here and 3:11. Probably means something like *contentious* in this context.
3. jealousy [G2205b, ze_los: zeal]. *Zeal* is probably better than *jealousy* since jealousy is not needed to make sense of this verse. Zeal can be a good thing, but the addition of the word *bitter* shows that James is referring to an evil zeal. So, it could be an evil zeal for their own position or group, rather than a zeal for truth.
4. selfish ambition (one word) [G2052, eritheia: rivalry, faction]. A desire for advantage over others; an exalting of oneself at the expense of others. Showing a factious spirit.
5. arrogant [G2620, katakauchaomai: to exult over].
6. lie against the truth. In their attempts to present or defend truth, their arrogance and manner of life makes it a lie. Truth that is not spoken in love is no longer truth (Eph 4:15, 21). It is given here to contrast with wisdom. It might go by the name "wisdom" (3:15) but it is not true wisdom.

JAMES 3:15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

1. This wisdom. It is not true wisdom. It is a worldly wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1). It evaluates everything by worldly standards. Self-exaltation is its centerpiece. Worldly self-seekers cannot have the wisdom of God (Mt 7:16-20; 2 Tim 3:7).
 2. from above [G509, ano_then]. Another way of saying that it comes from God.
 3. earthly [G1919, epigeios]. Having a proper perspective is one aspect of wisdom. This "worldly wisdom" is (first of all) a mind set on earthly things (Phil 3:19). It cannot see a bigger picture [from above] and thus gain a true perspective.
 4. natural [G5591, psuchikos: of the soul], from [G5990, psuche_: soul]. Found six times in the NT (1 Cor 2:14; 15:44, 44, 46, James 3:15; Jude 1:19). It is intended to contrast with spiritual [G4152, pneumatikos]. Paul contrasts these two terms in 1 Cor 2:14-15; cf. Jude 1:19. Spiritual people have received the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:12). Paul uses the term "human wisdom" in this passage (1 Cor 2:13) to describe those who do not have the Spirit.
 5. demonic [G1141, daimonio_de_s: demon-like]. There is an even deeper source of these attitudes. It is demon-like and it's source is the same as that of demons.
- Summary. Another way of using these terms is saying that this wisdom is from the earth rather than heaven, it is from the soul rather than the spirit, it is from demons rather than God. The picture here is somewhat related to one we presented back in 1:8.

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE (focused in God)

Visible --> body --> soul --> spirit --> Invisible

Visible = WORLD; Invisible = GOD

THE DOUBLE-MINDED [TWO-SOULED] PERSON

Visible <-- body <--soul-2 | soul-1--> spirit--> Invisible

soul-1 is the true self

soul-2 is the false self (not an actual entity)

THE SOULISH PERSON (focused in self)

Visible --> body --> soul <-- spirit <-- Invisible

Visible = EARTHLY THINGS; Invisible = DEVIL

JAMES 3:16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

1. jealousy [G2205b, ze_los: zeal]. Same as in 3:14
2. ambition [G2052, eritheia: rivalry]. Same as in 3:14.
3. disorder [G181, akatastasia: instability]. It is the same word for "unstable" in 1:8 and "restless" in 3:8. "God is not the God of confusion/disorder but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33). This verse is a description of the double-minded person which is an underlying theme throughout the book. Disorder is a characteristic of demons, so this thought is also continued here.
4. every evil thing. Probably means that these selfish attitudes create an environment that encourages many forms of evil.

JAMES 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

1. This approach reminds me of other lists, e.g., the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), the qualities of love (1 Cor 13). Some Greek scholars have noted that James appears to be trying to use words starting with the same Greek letter (see the list below).
2. from above. Now James starts the contrast to the other "wisdom" he described: "This wisdom is not that which comes down from above" (3:15). That "wisdom" was seen as earthly, soulish, demonic.
3. first. Wisdom is characterized first of all by purity. There are two families of words used to express purity. One way to distinguish these two families (and to show their close relationship) is to remember two sets of expressions common in the OT: (a) holy and profane, (b) clean and unclean. The first set has more to do with our relationship with God (e.g. sanctification). The second set is more closely related to ethical behavior (consider the expression, "clean up your

act") as well as ritual and physical cleansing. James will show this distinction later on: "Cleanse [G2511] your hands, you sinners; and purify [G48] your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:8). However there is some crossover between the sets.

- a. One set of words (the ones used here) comes for the same root [G40, hagios: holy]. It is primarily used for the purity that comes from God as well as people and things associated with Him. This family of words include [G53, hagnos: pure, holy (2 Cor 7:11; 11:2; Phil 4:8; 1 Tim 5:22; Titus 2:5; James 3:17; 1 Pet 3:2; 1 Jn 3:3)], [G48 hagnizo_ : purify (Jn 11:55; Acts 21:24, 26; 24:18; 1 Peter 1:22; James 4:8; 1 Jn 3:3)], [G47 hagneia: purity, chastity, propriety (1 Tim 4:12; 5:2)], [G54 hagnote_s: purity, sincerity (2 Cor 6:6; 11:3)], [G49 hagnismos: purification (Acts 21:26); [G55 hagno_s: pure motives (Phil 1:17)]. It basically means that the person whose wisdom is pure has taken on a character of God. One aspect of this character is the oneness of God. For example, people having God's wisdom would have unmixed motives. See above (3:13; 1:4-5, 7, 17, etc.) where I associate wisdom with the image of God.
- b. The second set comes from the idea of being clean [G2513, katharos: clean, pure]. Other members of this family include: [G2511, katharizo_ : cleanse], [G2512, katharismos: purification], [G2513, katharos: clean, pure], [G2514, katharote_s: cleansing]. The beatitude regarding pure in heart (Mt 5:8) used this family of words. It is basically purity in actions.
4. pure. James uses *pure* here to contrast with the self-seeking attitudes given in 3:14-16. It is an attitude focused on God, not on self, things. Its motivation is from God not from the devil.
5. peaceable [G1516, eire_nikos]. This aspect of wisdom pertains to relationships with others. It is directly related to righteousness (see the next verse, i.e., a right relationship with God and others). It is contrasted with the worldly wisdom described above, which is contentious, competitive, combative, clever, cruel, cutting, arrogant, ambitious, divisive, etc. Instead of being partial to self or to a select group, it seeks to serve others.
6. gentle [G1933, epieike_s]. Again we have a character trait of God described as an attribute of wisdom. It is a leniency that comes from love. In the LXX it is used mostly of God's disposition as King. This is not the Greek word that is often translated gentle or meek. Instead it is more closely related to forbearing, considerate, non-combative. It makes allowances, it does not insist on its rights, it forgives in situations where forgiveness is not expected but comes as a surprise. It is found five times in the NT: Phil 4:5; 1 Tim 3:3; Titus 3:2; James 3:17; 1 Pet 2:18.
7. reasonable [G2138b, eupeithe_s]. This word is found only here. It has two basic meanings: submissive (NIV), open to reason (ESV). KJV does a good job: easy to be entreated. It can mean easily persuaded. But it is not easy in the sense of easily swayed back and forth between opinions, but in the sense of being teachable. This person does not stubbornly hold to ideas but is willing to listen to explanations. This attitude stems from a desire to be impartial.
8. mercy [G1656, eleos]. To contrast with the above, e.g., 3:8.
9. mercy and good fruits [GG2590, karpos]. Mercy and good fruits go together. Standing alone mercy can simply be pity. But mercy should involve actions resulting in good fruits.
10. unwavering [G87, adiakritos]. Found only here. It is the negative of [G1252, diakrino_ : doubt]. See the above discussion on doubt, double-mindedness, etc. It refers to those who are not divided, vacillating, wavering, hesitant, etc. They speak with convictions. It is impartial, simple, harmonious, not given to a factious spirit.
11. without hypocrisy [G505, anupokritos]. It is the negative of [G5271, hypokrinomai: pretended(1)]. It does not act a part. It is not concealed nor disguised. It is unfeigned and sincere.

JAMES 3:18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

1. refers to an atmosphere or a soil from which things grow. It requires a community to provide the soil from which righteousness is produced as a fruit. This soil is produced by the deliberate efforts of community members who are constantly seeking to maintain right relationships (peace) with God and with others. They are seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Mt 6:33).

INTRODUCTION TO THE PRACTICAL SECTION (James 4-5)

New Testament letters often have two basic parts: (a) a theological section and (b) a practical section. This pattern is especially true for the writing of Paul. Here, in the book of James, we see this same pattern. Although the entire book of James, in one sense, is a very practical book, the second part of the book of James deals with more specific issues than does the first part. However, it would appear (for me at least) that James has placed the entire book in a chiasmic structure. The following content statements may not always be the best titles for a section, but I have chosen key words to illustrate the pairing of texts.

- A. Prayer: Asking in Faith (1:1-11)
- B. Trials, Temptations, etc. (1:12-18)
- C. Doers of the Word (1:19-27)
- D. The Rich and the Poor: Partiality (2:1-7)
- E. Law: Royal Law and Law of Liberty (2:8-13)
- F. Conduct: Faith Without Works is Dead (2:14-26)
- G. Speech: Taming the Tongue (3:1-12)
- H. Wisdom From Above (3:13-18)
- G' Speech: Quarrels, etc. (4:1-5)
- F' Conduct: Purified of Double-Mindedness (4:6-10)
- E' Law: a Judge or a Doer of the Law? (4:11-17)
- D' The Rich and the Poor: Selfish Living (5:1-6)
- C' Be Patient, Not Condemning and Judging (5:7-9)
- B' Suffering: Endurance Brings Blessing (5:10-11)
- A' Prayer in Suffering and Sickness (5:12-20)

In the same manner as another wisdom book in the Bible, James has placed his statement about wisdom at the center (hinge, pivot) of the book (cf. Job 28:28).

SPIRITUAL ADULTERY (James 4:1-5)

Following this structure, we see that James returns to the topic of speech (G-G'). The first three verse focus on this topic and are structured as a small chiasmus. Verses 4-5 provide a transition to James 4:6-10.

- A. What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? (James 4:1)
- B-1. You lust
- B-1. and do not have; (James 4:2a)
- C-1. you commit murder and are envious (James 4:2b)
- C-2. and cannot obtain; (James 4:2c)
- C-1' you fight and quarrel. (James 4:2d)
- C-2' You do not have because you do not ask. (James 4:2e)
- B-1' You ask
- B-2' and do not receive, (James 4:3a)
- A' because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend {it} on your pleasures. (James 4:3b)

JAMES 4:1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

1. quarrels and conflicts. In contrast to the peace wisdom provided (James 3:17), the readers were encountering quarrels and conflicts.
2. source. Instead of trying to offer strategies for dealing with these problems, James directs our attention to the source. He does this by asking a question to focus our attention and then answering his own question. The only solution is to address the problem at its source. This

source is first seen as pleasure but later we will see that it is the double-mindedness already addressed in chapter 1.

3. pleasures [G2237, *hedonism*]. Found 5 times in NT, twice in James (here and at 4:3). Our English word "hedonism" is derived from this Greek word. Hedonism is a philosophy that places pleasure as the chief goal of life. *Pleasure* is a synonym of the *desires* [G1939, *epithumia*] in 1:14-15 (poorly translated as *lust* in NASB).
4. war in your members. James is referring to the members of the physical body (not to members of the church), but he means it in a more metaphorical sense. It is simply another way of mentioning the conflict within the double-minded person (James 1:8; 4:8; cf. Rom 7:23; 1 Pet 2:11).

JAMES 4:2 You lust and do not have; {so} you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; {so} you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

1. You lust [G1937, *epithumeite*]. Same family of words as at 1:14-15. It should be translated as *desire*, not *lust*. It provides an opening for sin (1:14-15), but is not sinful in itself. It is used in LXX (Greek translation of OT) of the commandment not to covet (Exod 20:17; cf. Rom 7:7).
2. Frustrations. Notice all the frustrations in these verses ("do not have", "cannot obtain", "do not have" [again], "do not receive"). These failures contrast with the strong desire to have.
3. Reactions. The *frustrations* lead to *reactions*: murder, envy, fighting, quarreling.
4. commit murder. James almost certainly is referring to an attitude of the inner person, not actual killing.
5. envious [G2206, *zealous*]. It really means *jealous* or *zealous*. It refers us back to 3:14-16.
6. You do not have because you do not ask. At first, this would appear to be a detour from the main focus of the discussion. However, it really brings out an important aspect of these frustrations and reactions. It deals with the way we view the creation. These people see it as God's gift to them for their own personal enjoyment. They do not make a practice of asking God for the "things" they desire.
7. fight and quarrel. The words are the same as in 4:1 with a reversal of word order. However it is designed to pair with the previous set (see the chiasmic structure above): *fight* pairs with *murder* and *quarrel* pairs with *envy* [*jealous*].

JAMES 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend {it} on your pleasures.

1. ask... wrong motives. Even if they do ask God for these "things", the asking is from wrong motives. The creation is to be used by us in the service of God, not for the service of self. He is the giver of gifts (James 1:5-6, 17; Psa 84:11), but each gift requires a response of gratitude.
2. pleasures. James returns to this key word which help frame these three verses (cf. Psa 66:18).
3. God's will. We should be seeking God's will in how we are to use the creation for His glory. Notice, e.g., the focus on God's will in the beginning of the Lord's Prayer.

JAMES 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

1. adulteresses. James deliberately shocks his readers! Here again James is picturing an attitude of the inner person (the double-minded person). It is not sexual adultery. James sees God as Husband, drawing upon a long history of the OT prophets (cf. Isa 54:5; 57:3-9; Jer 3:20; Ezek 23:27; Mt 12:39). The book of Hosea is dedicated almost totally to this theme (see esp. 2:2-5; 3:1-5; 9:1;). The people of YHWH are pictured as His wife (Jer 31:32) and the bride of Christ (Eph 5:23-32; 2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:7; 21:9).
2. idolatry. YHWH demanded a single-minded devotion from Israel. Anything that detracted from this unique relationship was idolatry. The loss of allegiance to YHWH as they sought out other gods, made Israel into an adulteress. "Thus it is repeatedly compared to an adulterous wife who wants to keep the security and respectability of her home and husband but also wants to enjoy her lover" (Isa 1:21; Jer 3; Hos 1-3) [Davids].
3. friendship with the world. The world is the idol. Here "world" is an expression of a system of evil controlled by Satan (cf. 1 Jn 2:15-17). To love the world is to love God's enemy (2 Tim

4:10 [Demas]). We cannot make friends with God's enemies. To do so is to become the enemy of God.

JAMES 4:5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

1. Problems of interpretation. It is impossible to speak with any great certainty about the meaning of this verse. First, we do not know the scriptural source James has in mind here, so we cannot examine its background and setting. One key question is the identity of "Spirit/spirit" in this verse. Is James speaking of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 3:16) or the human spirit (1 Thess 5:23; Lk 1:46-47; Heb 4:12)? The expression "jealously desire" is puzzling. Is it really a way in which God can be described?
2. Scripture. It appears to be a direct quotation, but it is not found in the OT. However, two concepts given here are clearly found in the OT.
 - a. God is jealous (Exod 20:5; 34:14; Zech 1:14).
 - b. spirit dwelling (Gen 6:3-5; Num 35:34; Isa 63:8-16; Ezek 36:25-27). Ezek 36:25-27 goes well with where James is going (cf. James 4:8).
3. jealously [G5355, phthomos]. James has chosen a different word than the one he has used before [G2205b, ze_los] (3:13-18; 4:2), but it still can mean jealous. God is a jealous husband (Ex 20:5; 34:14; Dt 4:24). He will not tolerate adultery.
4. desires [G1971, epipotheo_]. Sometimes translated *yearns*. Again James changes words. He does not use the word for *desire* [G1937, epithumeo_] he has been using for people (4:2; 1:14-15). This word is used in a positive sense throughout the NT (Rom 1:11; Phil 1:8; 1 Thess 3:6; 2 Tim 1:4; 1 Pet 2:2).
5. Spirit or spirit. As fascinating as this question can be, the answer is not vital to our understanding. God greatly desires to be in fellowship with us. But the depth of fellowship He desires in not possible with the double-minded person. He wants all of us!

PURIFICATION OF DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS (James 4:6-10)

This passage is framed by the concept of humility (forming an inclusio). If James intended a chiasmus here, then it probably looks something like this.

- A. Greater grace (James 4:6a)
- B. Humble (James 4:6b)
- C. Submit to God (James 4:7)
- D. Cleanse hands/purify hearts: sinners/double-minded (James 4:8)
- C' Be miserable and mourn and weep (James 4:9)
- B' Humble (James 4:10a)
- A' He will exalt you (James 4:10b)

This structure makes good sense with "double-minded" at the center showing the central focus of the passage. It also clarifies the process: (1) greater grace, (2) humility, (3) mourn, (4) submission.

One of the features that holds these verses together is that all ten commands in 4:7-10 are in the aorist tense. Aorist tense is a "point-in-time" concept. These commands need to be completed NOW, once for all. They require an immediate and complete response. Get it done! Now!

Peter cites the same proverb used by James and also discusses similar topics (1 Pet 5:5-11). Some of these topics are grace, humility, exaltation, and resisting the devil. It is worthy of study. Here are a few excerpts. "... all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another" (1 Pet 5:5a). "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time" (1 Pet 5:6). "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen {and} establish you" (1 Pet 5:10).

JAMES 4:6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore {it} says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Prov 3:34).

1. greater grace. At least two levels of grace are given here. There is the grace sinners need to cleanse their hands and the greater grace needed to purify the heart. Of course there are many levels to grace. There are levels of "expected" grace, i.e., blessings we generally take for granted (unless we stop and ponder). Higher levels of grace are in the realm of the unexpected and are very pleasing. God goes so far beyond anything deserved or that we should expect. The *greater grace* James gives here is at the level of surprise. We so often do not think God capable of such grace. This surprise is especially true with regard to sin. How can God possibly solve my problem of double-mindedness? One of my favorite hymns is *Grace Greater than Our Sin* ("Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt, Grace that is greater than all our sin!"). God gives the grace needed to respond to His yearning for intimate fellowship with us (4:5).
2. Prov 3:34. This proverb contains both a promise and a warning: grace to the humble, opposition to the proud. We must keep in mind that everyone is receiving a "minimal" (how can I use such a word with respect to God!) level of grace. James is thinking of higher levels of grace up to the "greater" grace. These higher levels of grace are simply not available to the proud.
3. opposes the proud. One of the ways God opposes the proud is to allow them to be self-deceived. The proud can convince themselves that they are in a class beyond others and thus will receive special consideration. They might have experienced wonderful, unexpected grace at some point in the past. God's focus is on our present circumstances, not the past.
4. grace to the humble. Humility becomes the first necessary step in our development of a lasting relationship with God.

JAMES 4:7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

1. Submit [G5293, hupotasso_]. It is regularly used of submission to human authority (Lk 2:51; Rom 13:1; Eph 5:21; Titus 2:9; 1 Pet 2:13) and to God (Heb 12:9). Although this is the first of a series of commands, it is really last in the sequence needed to make them all possible.
2. A sequence. Jesus gives a basic sequence in the first three beatitudes (Matt 5:3-5): poor in spirit (humility), mourning (a sorrow towards God), meekness/gentleness (a submission to authority). These three form the essential triad for relating to God. In this book (James), we are also given the results of this triad: humility results in exaltation, mourning turns to joy, and submission brings peace.
3. Resist the devil. There are at least two levels here.
 - a. A matter of loyalty. The devil is the enemy of God. He must also be your enemy.
 - b. Who is the authority in your life? Is God that authority? Then being submissive to God gives us the ability to resist the devil.
4. resist [G436, anthiste_mi]. Resist is not attack! The armor described in Eph 6:10-17 is defensive (not offensive) armor. We are not capable of defeating the devil. It is the submission to God that makes the difference. See 1 Pet 5:8-9.
5. the devil. James introduces the devil at this point. Up to now James has stressed our responsibility (we are not allowed to say "The devil made me do it!"). But now he needs to emphasize the power of the evil one. To remove double-mindedness and maintain that new status requires a diligence in our carrying out the commands in this section and making sure that the devil is not given any opportunities to change our new orientation.
6. he will flee from you. When we learn how to allow God to fight the battle with the devil, he is easily driven off (but always looking for opportunity to get past our defenses). Here is the place where greater grace is at work. It is the confession of weakness and dependence that allows for the defeat of our enemy. When we try to match him power for power, he will win. He cannot fight with the submissive heart. Jesus set an example for us: "... for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me" (Jn 14:30b-31a). Weakness releases the power of God (2 Cor 12:9-10). He cannot (or will not) defeat the enemy if we choose to enter into battle with him. These are some of the "rules of engagement" between God and Satan.

JAMES 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

1. Draw near to God. Here is one of the essential requirements for dealing with double-mindedness - for a number of reasons. First, it is impossible to make ourselves humble. True humility comes only in experiencing someone greater than or better than we are. And the humility necessary to reorient us from self to God must come in an encounter with God. Drawing near to God also gets us out of the devil's territory! The devil has tremendous appeal when viewed from darkness. But his "glitter" has very little appeal when we are in the presence of Light.
2. Draw close enough so as to fear God. The word for "draw near" is used of the priest's approach to God (Ex 19:22; Lev 10:3; Ezek 43:19; 44:13). It refers to worship. Fear is a very important biblical word, and many people translate it as *reverence* or *awe* and then basically ignore it. It has much greater meaning than these two concepts! James does not use the word *fear*, so I will not expand on this idea, except for this one thought. Real worship is the result of fear. If we are not beginning to grasp some of the depths of the biblical concept of fear, then we simply have not drawn near enough to God.
3. He will draw near to you. Here is the secret to victory. God will only be as close to us as we want Him to be. But if we do get close to Him, then we must change!
4. Cleanse [G2511, *kathrizo*] your hands, you sinners and purify [G48, *hagnizo*] your hearts, you double-minded [G1374, *dipsuchos*: two-souled]. The term *sinners* is generally used for the openly ungodly. The term *hands* often emphasizes conduct, but James does not limit it to conduct. The context here requires us to see the contrast between the two commands before we can understand where James is going.
 - a. Cleanse [G2511, *kathrizo*] and purify [G48, *hagnizo*]. It is clear that there is some overlap in the use of these words in the NT. However, when placed in contrast with each other, then *cleanse* has more to do with actions and attitudes that need to be removed. *Purify* has more to do with being pure. For example, it is derived from the Greek word for holy. A very important usage is found in 1 John: "And everyone who has this hope {fixed} on Him purifies himself, just as He [Christ] is pure" (1 Jn 3:3). Another one is in 1 Peter: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Pet 1:22). James also sees this purity as a characteristic of wisdom (3:17).
 - b. hands and heart. In connection with *cleanse* and *purify* ("a" above), it is now easy to see that the focus of "cleanse hands" is more on the outward expressions of sin [the verb], while "purify heart" is on the inner condition of sin [the noun].
 - c. sinners and double-minded. These terms give added support to the conclusion in "b", i.e., "sinners" emphasizes sinning [verb] and double-minded stresses a wrong orientation of the soul [the noun]. Looking at a larger picture, James could very well be showing us two crisis experiences (justification and sanctification) in God's plan for our redemption.
5. Not optional. There are a number of places in the Bible where we see that responding to this command is not optional. A favorite of mine is a parallel statement from the OT. "Who may ascend into the hill of YHWH? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully" (Ps 24:3-4). Jesus declared that it is the pure in heart who will see God (Mt 5:8; cf. Heb 12:14).

JAMES 4:9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

1. Chiasmus. If James 4:6-10 is a chiasmus, then we have passed the center [hinge, pivot] at 4:8 with the commands for purity. James now continues to give us some of the features necessary for the central truths of 4:8 to become a reality.
2. First triad in the beatitudes (see above). *Mourn* is one of the essential elements in a right relationship with God. Of course, James deliberately piles up a whole list of related terms here in order to make his point [miserable, mourn, weep, gloom]. But is he demanding a "sad-faced religion" for us? By no means! Read on.
3. Be miserable [G5003, *talaipo_reo*]. Found only here, it means to deliberately place ourselves in a place of distress. Here again, we are given a command we cannot carry out without God's help. What is this "help" we need from God? We must have a godly sorrow [a sorrow towards God] (2 Cor 7:8-11) because of our sinfulness (in all of its expressions and conditions). It is only as we submit to God (the passage paired with this one) and draw near to Him, that He will draw

near to us. As this holy God becomes a greater Presence in our lives, then, like Isaiah of old (Isa 6:1-7), we become more aware of our sinfulness and lack of holiness. One of the purposes of the revelations of God to us is that we might be more aware of our sinfulness. For example, Paul states that the Law was given "so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful" (Rom 7:13). We need an added awareness of how truly awful sin really is. It will make us miserable [under great distress], and will result in mourning and weeping.

4. gloom [G2726, kate_pheia]. It refers to dejection [with eyes cast down]. The tax collector in one of the parables of Jesus is the classical picture of this attitude. "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Lk 18:13-14).
5. let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Again we ask the question: Is James describing a joyless Christianity? Of course not! In order to understand what James is saying we must first focus on the word *your* in our sentence. It is *your* laughter and joy that must be surrendered. These terms are tied to the idea of pleasure given earlier. We must sacrifice our "pleasures" in order for His desires to be fulfilled. In like manner, OUR joy must be turned to gloom, before HIS joy can be ours. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and {that} your joy may be made full" (John 15:11). "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy" (John 16:20; read 16:20-24; 17:13).

JAMES 4:10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

1. Framing the passage [an inclusio]. As was mentioned earlier, the passage is framed by the idea of humility as given in 4:6 and 4:10. It shows the centrality of humility in establishing a relationship with God.
2. Presence of the Lord. Again James stresses that only if we draw near to God and dwell in His presence, and His presence dwells with us, can the problem of double-mindedness be solved.
3. exalt you. In our pairing of verses in the chiasmus, we see that "exalt you" is paired with "greater grace" (4:6). God really wants to exalt us, but it is only possible when certain conditions are met. (In so many ways we limit the grace available to us!) One of these conditions is the purifying of our double-mindedness.

ARROGANCE AGAINST LAWGIVER AND JUDGE (James 4:11-17)

The call to humility in the previous passage leads directly into a passage about arrogance and presumption. The key to understanding this passage is grasping the unique roles God plays as Lawgiver and Judge. For a person to assume these roles is to repeat the sin of Adam and Eve in their desire to be like God (knowing good and evil, authority, etc.). Of course, we are called to be like Him in character, but not in power. We should not attempt to take over His unique roles. Only God is allowed to be in the position of Lawgiver and Judge. He both makes the law and determines how well we perform. We are dependent upon Him for life. To seek to be the authority in our personal lives is to presume upon His grace. We must not be arrogant or presumptuous.

Here again we are helped when we see that this passage is paired with James 2:8-13 [E, E'] in the overall chiastic structure of the book. The use of the word "neighbor" in 4:13 takes us back to this parallel passage. This word clarifies where James is coming from when he talks about law here. In the earlier passage he quoted "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18) and called it the royal law (James 2:8). He also wrote about being a transgressor of the law (2:9-11). Note also that we should want to be judged by the "law of liberty" (2:12), which will not happen if we are not merciful.

JAMES 4:11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge {of it}.

1. speak(s) against [G2635, katalaleo]. Found only 5 times in the NT, with three of them found in this verse (others at 1 Pet 2:12; 3:16). Related words [G2636, G2637] are found at Rom 1:30; 2 Cor 12:20; 1 Pet 2:1. The NIV changes the first of these three occurrences in this verse to "do not slander" which, while technically correct, is too limiting. "Speak against" is wider in meaning than *slander*; it includes any form of speaking against another. To think that James is limiting his statements here to slander is to make it easier to convince ourselves we are doing nothing wrong when we speak against a fellow Christian. For example, we usually think of slander as telling lies about someone. However, a statement may be quite accurate, and still it may also be something that should not be said. "Speak against" is a present imperative, and therefore the translation should show a continual speaking ("Stop speaking against..." catches the meaning).
2. slander. But slander is included here! One writer calls slander "the third tongue": "It slays three people: the speaker, the spoken to, the spoken of" (James Adamson).
 - a. the speaker. Such action brings the speaker under judgment (the central teaching of James 4:11-12).
 - b. The listener ("the spoken to"). It harms the listener, since it affects the listener's relationship to the speaker and to the object of the slander. For example, this new information may poison the relationships.
 - c. The object ("the spoken of"). It harms the reputation of this person and changes the dynamics of the congregational relationships.
3. brother. The word shows up three times here. It is not just a "neighbor" who is to be loved, it is a brother. Actually, it is harder to avoid a judgment attitude toward a fellow Christian than to others. Our expectations for a brother are higher. Thus it is harder for a brother is live up to them. However, we must not lower these expectations but hold them in tension. The sacrificial love required in the church (see the new commandment given by Jesus [John 13:34-35]) means that we accept people just as they are even while desiring that they change. We must "live and love" with their constant "failure" to measure up!
4. speaks against a brother or judges his brother. "Or" is found in most ancient MSS, but "and" is found in some later ones. It is easy to see how a mistake in copying manuscripts could happen here. In one way they are basically the same statements, but in another way they are different. The difference, however, is mostly of our making. We want to excuse our "little observations" our "minor criticism" about another person as something outside the law of love. We are shocked when we realize (if we ever have the honesty to face up to the truth) that such talking is actually judging the person.
5. Paired statement. James deliberately uses two sets of paired statements: speaks against brother/law and judges brother/law. Such actions are not consistent with loving our neighbor/brother. Therefore people who do these acts are not only disobeying the law, they are setting themselves above the law.
6. speaks against the law and judges the law. James reminds us of a fundamental concept of authority, related even to the very nature of truth. Most people choose to have authority over truth. Christians are called to seek truth, to love truth, and to place themselves under the authority of truth. Because, in reality, God is Truth. The same holds for Law. When we speak against Law, we are saying that it should be changed to suit us. Or we take the position that a law means something different than what it appears to mean. We have made ourselves the authority in two realms. We have the authority to create/change law (legislative), and we have the authority to interpret law (judicial).
7. but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law. You see, the key point is authority. Our relationship to God is not a matter of how well we carry out the requirements of the law ("doers of the law"). The fundamental question remains: Are we in submission to authority? (If not, then we can not be described as "doers of the law" no matter how "righteous" our actions appear to be.) On Judgment Day are we planning to explain to God what His requirements should have been? We think we know more about "fairness" than He does! Such an attitude is a sign of self-righteousness and arrogance.
8. References. Before leaving this topic, perhaps several references to not speaking against or judging others should be given, since it is a major theme of the Bible: Lev 19:16-18; Num 12:1;

21:5; Psa 50:20; 101:5; Mt 7:1-7; Lk 6:37-42; Jn 7:24; 8:15-16; 12:31; Rom 2:1; 14:4-13; 1 Cor 4:5; 5:12. Check out some vice lists: Rom 1:30; 2 Cor 12:20; 1 Pet 2:1; 2 Pet 2:12; 3:16.

JAMES 4:12 There is {only} one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

1. Much worse! If we didn't think it was possible to make it any worse, James does so now. We are not just judging the law, we are judging God. We are judging God, because we are saying that God is not instructing, directing and empowering this person (the one we are judging) properly.
2. {only} one Lawgiver and Judge. There can be only one Lawgiver and Judge. If we attempt to take over these unique roles of God, then we have become His judge. But it is impossible. He is and always will be the only person to hold these offices (Isa 33:22; Mt 10:28; Jn 19:11; Rom 2:16; 3:6; 13:1; Heb 12:23; 13:4).
3. the One who is able to save and to destroy. Here is the test of who is the ultimate Lawgiver and Judge. Judgment Day belongs to Him, as well as the moment-by-moment evaluations and corrections of our obedience. This truth should be a fundamental guiding principle to every aspect of our life. We will stand before Him and give an account of every moment of our lives.
4. but who are you who judge your neighbor? "You" is placed first in the statement for emphasis. It is probably sarcastic. "But You? Who are *you*?" (The NIV does a fair job here.) "A poor, weak, dying worm" is John Wesley's answer to this question! Really, what qualifications do we have to be the judge of others? Granted, there is a whole other dimension to this issue. There are forms of judging which are necessary for the church to perform (e.g., 1 Cor 5). But to introduce that dimension would dilute what James is wanting to teach us here.
5. A pause to consider one danger. Let us stop and remember the previous section (James 6-10). If we allow God to deal radically with our double-mindedness, one problem shows up almost immediately. We have better "vision" to see double-mindedness in others. Careful! From our new enlightened viewpoint, we can easily become a judge! If so, we are in danger of exalting ourselves and not waiting for God to exalt us (4:10). We have again taken our eyes off God, who alone can help us remain humble.
6. judge your neighbor. I said before that we must hold high expectations of our fellow believers. But we must not let our expectations become our demands (neither secretly or openly) on their lives. Only God is able to impartially evaluate the affirmations, attitudes, actions, etc. of a person. What we may see as imperfect performance ("irresponsible", "inexcusable") may not be the way God sees it. For example, we may find it inexcusable for people not to fulfill an obligation ("they promised to be on time and to complete the task properly"). But only God can correctly determine responsibility. "Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Rom 14:4). Our job is to love. "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8).
7. Some references: Gen 18:25; Dt 33:39; 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Kgs 5:7; Psa 75:7; Isa 33:22; Mt 7:1-5, 12; 10:15, 22, 28 (read 5-42); Jn 5:22-23, 30; Rom 14:4-13; Heb 5:7; 7:11; 8:6; 2 Tim 4:8.
8. A practical suggestion: prayer. Set up a schedule so that you pray specifically for every member of your fellowship on a regular basis. Don't bother telling God what needs to be changed in others. Pray for what needs to be changed in your relationship with each person. It is very helpful to start with a prayer of thanksgiving, including gratitude for the person as well as being thankful that the person is a part of your fellowship. Pray that there will be nothing that hurts your relationship with this person. If God reveals something to you in this regard, then pray until it is effectively removed. (Sometimes these prayers for removal of barriers can take many days.) Picture yourself giving this person a big hug at your next encounter. (God may not want you to actually do it, but picturing this action often reveals barriers.) Much more could be said, but I think you get the idea. Most of all, let God guide your prayers.

JAMES 4:13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."

JAMES 4:14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are {just} a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

JAMES 4:15 Instead, {you ought} to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

1. James now gives us another example of the typical failure to recognize that God is Lawgiver and Judge. Again, the background consists of people who have allowed God to deal radically with their double-mindedness. However, they have not yet realized that this new orientation requires many changes in the day-to-day activities of our lives. The example James uses here is well chosen. Of course, we know that God wants to be involved in the moral decisions of our lives. We might even realize that He wants to be involved in how we spend our spare time. But, when it comes to "making a living" that is just something everyone needs to do. And we need to do it well so that we can take care of family, provide for the future, give to the work of God, etc.
2. Come now [age nun]. It is found only here and at 5:1. This expression is intended to grab our attention. Something is about to be introduced that needs to be taken seriously. "Come now" is often used by prophets to open the eyes of people who have "blinded" themselves to truth. Sometimes it is used sarcastically.
3. you who say. James is addressing people within the congregation who have not realized the full measure of what a single-minded devotion (as opposed to double-mindedness) to God involves.
4. Plans. Notice the well-laid plans: we will go, spend, engage, make. Most commentaries see these statements as obvious expressions of arrogant self-sufficiency. And, of course, it is true that they are expressions of arrogance. However, perhaps it is better to see the beginning tone of this passage as a wake-up call to people who have not yet realized that God needs to be involved in every aspect of our lives. These people may be simply seeing themselves as making responsible, long-range plans. However, God is not mentioned. He has been left out of this planning. Many people who have been followers of Christ for years still think that God has given them certain abilities and they are supposed to use them responsibly. Some of these people even see life as a challenge God has placed before them, and they actually enjoy responding to the challenge. They also love to win! In other words, they simply are thinking the same way the rest of the world is thinking! But for the single-minded, everything is now sacred, even what we might view as secular.
5. vapor. People need to remember the transitory nature of life. It is a common theme in the Bible (1 Chron 29:15; Job 7:6-7; 8:9; 9:25-26; 20:8; Psa 39:5-6; 78:39; 90:4-6, 9; Isa 38:12; 1 Pet 1:24). The "life is a vapor" viewpoint helps us keep a good perspective on both the future and the present.
6. If the Lord wills. James is asking people to consider a totally different attitude about life. We need to confess our dependence on God, and we should begin the process of changing our moment-by-moment perspective on how we are to live.
7. live, do this, do that. Everything about our lives should be placed totally under the control of God. We need to have an increasing awareness of the ramifications of our single-minded devotion to God.
8. to say. It is in the present tense, showing continuous action. It is not some formula to be cited, but a life to be lived. Some people say "God willing" -- expressing it as a "pious" hope that God will not interfere with what they want to do. Indeed, they even hope that God will bless *their* plans. But we must not choose to be in charge of our lives. Paul didn't (Acts 18:21; Rom 1:10; 1 Cor 4:19; 16:7; Phil 2:19, 24). He lived a life of dependence.
9. Lord wills. We should rest humbly in the will of God (Acts 18:21; 21:14; 1 Cor 4:19; Heb 6:3). God's will can only be found through careful and consistent prayer, asking God daily for guidance for this day, tomorrow and for all our necessary long-range goals. God also requires that we learn dependence on others, e.g., seeking counsel of other Christians. Let them help in our decisions. Not demonstrating this dependence just might spring from a secret hope that God will not impose His will upon us.

JAMES 4:16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

1. But as it is. James challenges his readers to see their actions in a whole new light.
2. Others see that James has already declared these people to be arrogant. However, I think he has waited until now to identify the source of their actions.
3. Humility. Remember that humility is a key theme in this book. It has especially been important in the earlier discussions of this chapter. One of the most difficult tasks is to try to understand

our level of humility. We all need wake-up calls, like this one, to shock us into realizing how much we fail at being humble.

4. arrogance [G212, alazoneia]. Found only two times in the NT, here and at 1 Jn 2:16. A related word [G213, alazo_n] is found two times (Rom 1:30; 2 Tim 3:2). James used a different word for arrogance [G2620, katakauchaomai] earlier in the book. It is found four times in the NT (Rom 11:18, 18; James 2:13; 3:14). However, I have a problem describing arrogance, because it is the source of expressions, not the expressions themselves. *Unwarranted presumption* might be one of the better ways to describe it. It is a failure at godliness, i.e., not properly evaluating the person, character and roles of God as well as not allowing God to exercise His roles. The sin of presumption is a form of practical atheism, i.e., not having God in some of the areas of our lives. Arrogance often finds expression in our confidence in our ability to handle certain situations, when our confidence should be in God. In all of us, there are areas not yet fully under the control of God. I am not referring to areas of rebellion. Such areas must not exist in the single-minded person as they did in the double-minded person. These areas I have in mind are those which God has not yet enlightened us about. God has called us to an ever increasing wholeness, of which He is the total sovereign.
5. boast [G2744, kauchaomai]. Found ca. 36 times in the NT. In most cases it is seen as a bad thing, but in a few cases it is proper to boast (James 1:9; Rom 5:2-3, 11; 1 Thes 2:9; Phil 2:16). (I choose to discuss "arrogance" before "boast" since arrogance is the basis of this boasting.) If we want to gain insight into the level of our arrogance, then we need to examine the boasting in our hearts. This boasting of the heart may never find verbal expression, but it can be detected if we are alert for it. Boasting [G2746a, kauche_ma] is found ca. 6 times in the NT and is from the same word group as the above.
6. such boasting is evil. This boasting in our arrogance is not just foolishness, it is evil. This form of boasting steals glory from God, not giving Him what is His due. He is the source of all good, and He should be given credit for it. Instead, like the Rich Fool in the parable of Jesus (Lk 12:16-21), we look at the blessings in our lives and see them as accomplishments. And since *we did it*, we have the right to enjoy these benefits.

JAMES 4:17 Therefore, to one who knows {the} right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

1. Therefore [oun]. This term introduces a concluding summary statement. It clearly refers to 4:13-17, but how far back does it really go? I think it must go back at least to 4:11. However, there can be little doubt that it can be easily applied to this entire chapter. Indeed, it really has a very wide application. In fact, the change from second person plural to third person singular supports the suggestion that this statement is a general type of maxim. And we know how very well proverbs fit in wisdom literature! Cf. 2:12-13 and 3:18.
2. to do, do it. This book has done a marvelous job of balancing thinking, being, and doing (the three areas where faith *must* be active for it to be real). Here again James gives the emphasis on doing.
3. it is sin. James focuses on the seriousness of sinning against light (Lev 4:2; Lk 12:48; Jn 9:41; 15:22; 1 Jn 1).

EXHORTATION: FROM ADMONISHMENT TO ENCOURAGEMENT (James 5)

Exhortation can emphasize either admonishment or encouragement. Up to this point, admonishment has been the focus of the instruction. Now James changes to encouragement to close out the letter. Most anything in the final chapter that might appear to be admonishment is more like advice on how to handle various situations.

JUDGMENT ON THE SELFISH RICH (James 5:1-6)

Some commentaries tie this section closely with the previous one (4:13-17), but that is probably a mistake. (In their defense, it does continue a theme of selfishness found in the previous chapter and both have the same opening.) Perhaps they have failed to remember that James is very much an "OT

book" retaining much of the flavor of the wisdom literature. But, at this point, James becomes an OT prophet. However, he does not bring admonishments to his readers (believers). Instead, he brings encouragement to them by pronouncing judgment upon the "pagan" nations -- an approach common among the writing prophets. To our surprise, these "nations" turn out to be the Jews, and, more specifically, rich Jews. Notice, also, that there is not a call for repentance. Those addressed here most likely will never read the warnings James gives in these few verses. They were written as an encouragement.

In terms of the overall chiasmic structure, this section is matched with James 2:1-7, another passage about the rich. But that passage was directed against the church for showing partiality to the rich.

This passage does have some chiasmic flavor. It is sometimes hard to tell if a writer is deliberately creating a chiasmus or simply unconsciously revealing a common way of thinking in that culture. Note the following: James 5:1-3 focuses on the *punishment* and 5:5-6 on describing the *offense* that brings about the judgment.

- A. The punishment (5:1-3)
 - D. It is in the last day... (5:3b)
- A' The offense (James 5:4-6)

It might be possible (with a little guesswork) to see some additional matching.

- A. weep, howl, miseries (5:1)
 - B. living: riches, garments, money (5:2-3a)
 - C. rust is a witness against you (5:3b)
 - D. It is in the last day... (5:3c)
 - C' pay withheld cries out against you (5:4)
- B' living: luxuriously with wanton pleasure (5:5)
- A' you have condemned ... the righteous (5:6)

JAMES 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.

1. Come now. This is the same way James started 4:13-17, and some people use the repetition of this exclamation to tie the two passages together. I disagree (see above). It is a prophetic call to grab the attention of the rich. Of course, they are not listening!
2. weep [G2799, klaio_]. This same word was used in 4:9. There it was a call to repentance. Here it is a call to dismay. Paul made a similar distinction between two types of sorrow. "I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to {the point of} repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to {the will of} God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to {the will of} God produces a repentance without regret, {leading} to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Cor 7:9-10).
3. howl [ololuzontes from G3649, ololuzo_]. This Greek word seeks to imitate the sound it describes (an onomatopoeic word). Some translations have tried to show this property by choosing "howl" [NASB] or "wail" [NIV] (also onomatopoeic words).
4. miseries [G5004, talaipo_ria]. This family of words are found only at Rom 3:16; 7:24; James 4:9; 5:1; Rev 3:17. In 4:9, James calls upon his reader to "be miserable" [G5003, talaipo_reo_], i.e., to make themselves miserable by seeing themselves as God sees them: selfish. Here, however, God will send your miseries as a judgment for their selfishness.
5. which are coming upon you. Of course, they do not know that these miseries are coming, since no one bothers to listen to the prophets of God.

JAMES 5:2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.

1. riches. This is a collective term for the abundance of possessions. The main items that typically constituted "riches" in those days were food, clothing, and precious metals. It could include all

these things and more. However, since James lists two other items (garments, money), it would appear that he is thinking of the storage of food (cattle, grain, etc.).

2. rotted, moth-eaten, rusted (5:3). All these verbs are in the perfect tense, giving these statements a prophetic flavor. It is as if it has already happened, and these items remain in that state. Of course, the physical state of these items has not changed. It is a prophetic picture of materials stored for so long that they have become useless to the owner. The owner just doesn't know it.
3. rotted [G4595, se_po_]. The word can be used to indicate general decay [or corruption]. James is probably thinking of such items as grain and meat. Remember the Parable of the Rich Fool (Lk 12:15-21)? See below for more comments on the Rich Fool.
4. moth-eaten (and rust in the next verse). James probably was thinking of the words of Jesus when he used these terms. Jesus said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt 6:19-21).
5. "What a waste!", James is probably thinking. All these stored items could be used to help others. Jesus has taught us that we are His stewards of everything He has given to us. See, e.g., the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-28; cf. Lk 19:12-27).

JAMES 5:3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

1. rusted. Of course, it is common knowledge that gold and silver do not actually rust. Knowing this fact helps intensify the lesson being taught. These rich people think that their wealth is secure.
2. Proverbial. The "rusting" of precious metals was used as a proverb in that day. It taught not only that wealth can be lost (as it will be at death), it can also be useless in many situations, e.g., incurable illness.
3. rust witness against you. The picture here is that money that is constantly changing hands does not rust, being "polished clean" in the handling. It is the inactivity, the hoarding for self, that is being condemned. Money does not have to be given away to make it useful. Loan it to people so they can start up in business. Help people get the tools and training necessary so that they can apply for a job. Assist someone with a down-payment. Here is a picture of Judgment Day where our stewardship is evaluated. Resources which have not been put to good use will bring judgment upon us.
4. consume your flesh like fire. But poor stewards of God's resources have more to worry about than Judgment Day. The rust is also pictured as a corrosive acid that will eat the flesh. Translation: the selfishness that leads to hoarding is destructive to the very soul of the person. People who do not see themselves as the servants of God (and live accordingly) are slowly destroying themselves.
5. It is in the last days. The expression "last days" has more than one level of meaning.
 - a. At one level of meaning, the last days started with the coming of Jesus. Christians are always in the last days (cf. Heb 1:1-2; 1 Jn 2:18). We have entered the age of the Spirit (Acts 2:17 quoting Joel 2:28-32). Through the indwelling presence of the Spirit, we are already experiencing something of the heaven to come. An end-time, apocalyptic event has happened to us; we have been transformed!
 - b. It also refers to the Second Coming of Jesus (Isa 2:2; Hos 3:5; Act 2:17; 2 Tim 3:1; 1 Pet 1:5). We are living in the shadow of His return, which could happen at any moment. It is an urgent time; we must keep focused on the business of the King. Jesus said, "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work" (Jn 9:4).
 - c. But last days can be any time. It can be the time of death for an individual. However, it can also refer to apocalyptic times for nations. For example, in the message Jesus gave about end-times, He blended together the events of His second coming (distant future) with the events of the destruction of Jerusalem (near future). Here is at least part of what James was thinking. In the war of A.D. 66-73, the wealthy landowners of Judea lost all the riches they had accumulated.

6. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! Can we read this and not think of the Parable of the Rich Fool told by Jesus? "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." And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years {to come}; take your ease, eat, drink {and} be merry.'" But God said to him, 'You fool! This {very} night your soul is required of you; and {now} who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Lk 12:15-21).

JAMES 5:4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, {and} which has been withheld by you, cries out {against you}; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth [Hosts].

1. Behold! Again we have a call to attention. The prophet is about to make a pronouncement.
2. pay. This word is the same as in the Greek OT [LXX] of Dt 24:15 (translated as "wages" below). The word "cry" there is also the same as "outcry" here. So it is highly probable that James is thinking of OT passages (cf. Dt 24:12-15; Lev 19:13). "You shall not oppress a hired servant {who is} poor and needy, whether {he is} one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns. You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to YHWH and it become sin in you" (Dt 24:14-15).
3. withheld [G879b, aphustereo_]. Scholars tell us that this word can simply mean delay in payment or it can mean a complete default.
4. cries out [G2896, krazo_] {against you}. This statement is parallel to the rust being a witness against them. It is the same basic thought (see at 5:3).
5. outcry [G995, boe_]. It can be a wild, incoherent cry of animals. I think "outcry" represents it well, since it pictures something that is not planned or scheduled, but spontaneous and nearly impossible to stop (cf. Lk 19:40 [below]). It is used in the Greek OT [LXX] of protests, especially against wrong and injustice (Exod 2:23 [Israel is bondage]; Dt 24:15 [see above]; Gen 18:20 [Sodom]; Lk 19:40). It is also used of spontaneous praise. "But Jesus answered, 'I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!'" (Lk 19:40).
6. reached the ear. This is not to be taken literally, since God is always listening. It means that action will soon follow, i.e., He will hear *and act*. The passage regarding the Israelites in slavery shows this connection very well. (It also contains the "outcry" expression.) "Now it came about in {the course of} those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry ["outcry"] for help because of {their} bondage rose up to God. So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice {of them}" (Exod 2:23-25; cf. 3:4-9).
7. Lord of Sabaoth [Hosts]. In the OT it is YHWH of Sabaoth [Hosts]. This expression not only shows God's total power over everything, it also pictures everything else in creation on God's side [His "army"] and supporting everything He does. It even included all of time. (For example, our ancestors cry out against us as we fail to live as they instructed - to choose the ancient paths [Jer 6:16; 18:15].) It means that every person must answer to Him. On Judgment Day, no one will stand up for us against YHWH of Sabaoth. Isaiah has an interesting passage about YHWH of Host opposing landowners (Isa 5:7-10). "For the vineyard of YHWH of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress" (Isa 5:7). "In my ears YHWH of hosts {has sworn}, "Surely, many houses shall become desolate, {even} great and fine ones, without occupants" (Isa 5:9).
8. Judgment Day. Although we know very little about what it really will look like, we can create many pictures of Judgment Day that give a fairly accurate message. How about this one? The Lord of Host asks the Selfish Rich to empty their pockets. "What is that I see? Isn't that the money belonging to the harvesters?", He says. "You stand condemned." There is some famous

saying of John Wesley (which I will not bother to look up) where he states that if he has more than a certain amount of money on him at the time of his death, then he stands condemned before God.

JAMES 5:5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

1. Aorist tense. The aorist tense is used often in James 5:5-6. It adds to the prophetic nature of these statements. These actions are listed for all in the courtroom to hear.
2. luxuriously [G5171, truphao_]. Found only here in NT, but the corresponding noun is found Lk 7:25; 2 Pet 2:13. It pictures people being weakened by lack of hard work. To injustice (5:4), James now adds self-indulgence. Again, typical of OT prophets, James contrasts the lifestyle of the rich who are cheating the poor with those being cheated. (Of course he only bothers to picture the rich. "Everyone" sees daily the plight of the poor.)
3. on the earth. Such people live only for the NOW of life. However the future must be faced. Things will be different then! The story of the Rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) given by Jesus is a good illustration of the message here. The rich man is described this way: "Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day" (Lk 16:19). But he dies and suffers for his selfishness. See also the Parable of the Rich Fool given above. Remember he said, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years {to come}; take your ease, eat, drink {and} be merry" (Lk 12:15-21). He too had to face judgment. "But God said to him, 'You fool! This {very} night your soul is required of you; and {now} who will own what you have prepared?'" (Lk 12:20).
4. wanton pleasure [one word: G4684, spatlaio_]. It is used in Ezek 16:49 [LXX] where the women of Jerusalem are likened to the women of Sodom. In 1 Tim 5:6, women in this condition are described as dead. The Bible sees it as the very lowest form of degradation.
5. you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. Scholars take two very different views of this passage. One viewpoint pictures these rich people having a feast on the day that an animal is slaughtered. Another viewpoint pictures the day of slaughter as the Day of Judgment. Both viewpoints provide a valid message so both will be given here.
 - a. A feast day. Fresh meat was a rare treat. Most meat was either salted or dried since fresh meat rotted very quickly. So on the day of slaughter, the rich would eat an abundance of fresh meat before the main portion was preserved for storage. So the basic picture is of people gorging themselves (over-indulgence).
 - b. A judgment day. The other viewpoint sees the rich acting like pigs who are being fattened for slaughter. They continue to gorge themselves on the very day they are butchered. They are totally unaware of what is coming. It turns out that their only reason for existence is to be slaughtered. Today we might say that their only contribution was that their dead bodies would provide nourishment for the soil. It is as if we are given a wider viewpoint. We see the coming Judgment (just around the corner) while they continue in their self-indulgence ignoring the cries of the watchmen.
6. day of slaughter. I prefer the interpretation given in 5-b. Support for this viewpoint is that this expression was used in the OT for judgment (Jer 12:3; Isa 34:2; Ezek 21:15). And "day of slaughter" matches well with "last day" (emphasized above). It also has historical support since, in the destruction of Jerusalem, the rich Jews were slaughtered without mercy and often with cruel torture.
7. heart. "Heart" has a variety of meanings in the Bible. Here it appears to represent the seat of appetites, passions affections, etc. (cf. Mt 15:19-20; Lk 21:34-36).

JAMES 5:6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous {man}; he does not resist you.

1. condemned [G2613a, katadikazo_] and put to death. What appears to be happening here is that the rich are using their influence with the judicial system to deny justice to the poor. The poor lose in the court of law, even to the point of being sentenced to death at times. For their own selfish gain, these people are willing to pervert justice.
2. righteous [G1342, dikaios]. Who is/are the righteous? Several choices are possible.
 - a. the Righteous One. Some people think James is talking about Jesus, who is called the Righteous One (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14; Isa 53:11; cf. 1 Pet 3:18; 1 Jn 2:1, 29; 3:7).

- b. Prophets (Mt 23:37), martyrs, saints. Others think James has this group in mind, e.g., OT prophets, Stephen, James [brother of John], saints, etc. James (the writer of this letter) will also die in like manner in A.D. 62.
 - c. Believers in general. In this case, James is not thinking of specific individuals (especially not Jesus, prophets, etc.). Rather, James is thinking of believers in general who are trying to live as God would have them live. I think this is probably the best choice, although "all the above" might be right also.
3. Irony. Note the irony in the two words *condemned* [G2613a, katadikazo_] and *righteous* [G1342, dikaios]. Both come from the root word [G1349, dike_] meaning *right* or *justice*. Those people who are in the right are not receiving justice.
4. he does not resist you. It is the negative form of the same word used of God resisting the proud (4:6). It is in the present tense which makes it stand out with the aorist tense dominating 5:4-5. Why do these people not resist the rich? Again we have more than one viewpoint.
- a. Some see these people as helpless. They have no source of power within the community, and thus resistance is useless. If this is the case, then the condemnation coming upon the rich should be greater because of the inability of the righteous to resist.
 - b. Others think that these believers do not resist because they were taught by Jesus not to resist evil (Mt 5:38-42).
 - c. An alternate view. I would like to propose another perspective. Truly righteous people put their trust in God for everything (food as well as justice). Why are they not getting justice, if they are trusting in God? It is a crisis of faith with believers, but they are expected to trust in God even when they are being killed. Here, I think, is the key thought James wants us to discover. These rich people are not sinning against some helpless people, they are committing a personal crime against the Lord of Hosts. In such a case, their condemnation will be far greater. Remember this passage is written to encourage believers. Justice will win in the end.

PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE (JAMES 5:7-11)

These verses are paired with 1:12-27 in our chiasmic structure. In the earlier passage we were called upon to persevere under trials, to be slow to speak and slow to anger. Also we are told to bridle our tongue. God is seen as the giver of every good thing and every perfect gift.

James uses two closely related families of words in this passage. The verb *patient* [G3114, makrothumeo_] is used at James 5:7, 7, 8, while a noun *patience* [G3115, makrothumia] is used at 5:10. The other family of words has *endured* [G5278, hupomeno_] at James 5:11 and *endurance* [G5281, hupomone_] at 5:11 (also at 1:3, 4). The two words appear together at 2 Cor 6:4, 6; Col 1:11; 2 Tim 3:10. They are used in a well-known passage (1 Cor 13). "Love is patient ... endures all things" (1 Cor 13:4, 7).

The words translated patient/patience is normally used with respect to people. It does not try to "even the score" with others. God is patient with us (Rom 2:4; 1 Pet 3:20).

By contrast, the words translated endured/endurance generally refers to things, situations, etc. It is sometimes described as holding steady [steadfastness] thorough the storm. It does not give up. However, it is not a "grin and bear it" attitude, but one that relies on strength from higher goals, commitments, etc.

James used three examples to encourage us to be patient and to endure: the farmer, prophet, Job.

This passage also emphasizes the coming [G3952, paraousia] of the Lord (James 5:7, 8), along with "the Judge is standing right at the door" (James 5:9). These are matched with a common emphasis from the previous passage: last days (5:3), day of slaughter (5:5) as well as the outcry reaching the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (5:4).

The imminent coming of the Lord is a common NT theme (cf. Mt 24:27, 37, 39; Lk 21:31; 1 Thess 4:13-18; Heb 10:25, 37; 1 Pet 4:7).

JAMES 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

1. Therefore [oun]. The call to patience is related to the suffering described in the previous verses.
2. brethren. His focus now turns more directly to his fellow-believers.
3. patient. See above.
4. coming (see above). It was commonly used for the coming of a king. The expectation was that this a royal visit would correct all wrongs. It is intended to be a picture of royalty and power. Harvest is sometimes a metaphor for the coming of the Lord (Mt 13:39).
5. waits for the precious produce of the soil. Farmers cannot control the situation. It is beyond their control. They can do nothing to insure the coming of the rains at the proper time. They simply had to wait in hope and patience. They must wait both for the rains and also for the "soil" to produce the crop. They cannot make either one happen.
6. Early rains (usually come in October/November) at the beginning of the growing season. The late rains (in April/May) came near the end of the season. These are mentioned in the OT (e.g., Dt 11:14; Jer 5:24; Hos 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zech 10:1).

JAMES 5:8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

1. strengthen [G4741, ste_rizo_]. The word indicates making things secure, as well as providing solid support. It gives the sense of establishing a person, making it very difficult to move them away from their values, goals, etc. (immovable [1 Cor 15:58]).
2. strengthen your hearts. Here *heart* refers to the inner person (not just the seat of affections). We are called to strengthen our resolve to be who we really want to be, to do what needs to be done, etc. "David strengthened himself in YHWH his God" (1 Sam 30:6). We are also told that God wants to do this for us (2 Thess 2:17; 1 Pet 5:10).
3. coming of the Lord (see above).
4. is near. While we do not know when the Lord is coming, we hold fast to the truth that He is coming and our expectation is that it could happen NOW. So we are to live in anticipation. Really, after more than 2000 years of waiting? Yes, we are. However, remember our discussion about the Last Days. The same holds true for the coming of the Lord. He actually comes often to correct wrongs, especially to punish groups of people (e.g., the rich discussed above were punished at the Fall of Jerusalem).

JAMES 5:9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

1. complain [G4727, stenazo_]. In the NASB, this word is translated groan (3x), grief (1x), deep sigh (1x), complain (1x - here). It typically means to moan, sigh, or groan. This word refers more to inner feeling than outward expression, e.g., to groan within oneself. So, *complain* [NIV: *grumble*] is a poor translation here, since it allows us to excuse ourselves from guilt if we do not openly complain about someone. It appears to be referring to a whole range of unexpressed and unacceptable feelings towards others. These feelings could include bitterness, resentment, disappointment, etc. The verb is in the present tense, so it refers to ongoing feelings. We must not equate this word solely with wrong feelings however. In fact, it is sometimes closely associated with prayer (Mk 7:34 [Jesus praying], Rom 8:23).
2. one another. The present tense of the verb [stenazete] shows us that this situation is not some isolated incident. In the interaction among family [and the church is a family!], there are bound to be strong feelings about issues, decisions, incidents, operations, etc. For example, the deep sigh expressed by Jesus was probably a sigh of disappointment (Mk 7:34). Remember, patience is the key theme in this section. James calls us to deal with our strong feelings so that we do not build up long-term resentment, etc. towards one another. Living together closely as a family creates situations where the stirring up of such feelings is inevitable. We must deal with them daily. Here is one of the chief reasons why we need to pray one for another (James 5:16; Eph 6:18; Phil 1:3-4). Of course, we need to pray for healing for others and for ourselves (James 5:16). But this prayer for healing will often be about the healing of hurt feelings. To avoid the

building up of wrong feelings towards others within the fellowship, we need to pray (on a regular basis) for everyone within the fellowship (the next topic in this book!). This prayer should not be focused on what is wrong with them (praying that God will "fix" them!). Instead, it should first be a prayer of thanksgiving that they are in the fellowship and for their contributions to the fellowship (cf. Phil 1:3-5). We need to pray fervently for one another, praying that we might love and accept others as they are, not as we wish they would be. And this prayer for love should include loving, even if they never change into the people you wish they would be.

3. you yourself may not be judged. Now we see clearly what we are doing. These wrong feelings (even though they are not openly expressed) come under the heading of judging others. So the warnings of Jesus (e.g., Mt 7:1-2) and those of James in this book (e.g., James 4:11-12; 2:4) are to be taken seriously in regard to these wrong feelings. We have become judgmental!
4. Judge. The Judge is not named. However, it is very likely connected to the "coming" mentioned in the previous verse, which would make Jesus the Judge.
5. standing right at the door. The Judge is listening and ready to enter and punish. Have you ever been saying something to a member of your family - something that you would never say in public? Then you hear a knock on the door! You just "know" that the unknown visitor heard *everything*!
6. Behold! This word indicates (to me at least) that we have already been caught. The Judge is not just "coming up the walkway" so that we have time to change our words and tone. The Judge has first-hand evidence against us.

JAMES 5:10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

1. example [G5262, hupodeigma]. The prophets are given to us as models, showing a proper response to the adversities of life.
2. brethren [G80, "brothers and sisters"]. Notice how often, in this section (5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19), James addresses his readers in this fashion. He wants them to know that he closely identifies with them in these difficult situations.
3. suffering [G2552, kakopatheia]. This word appears only here in the NT. The corresponding verb [G2553, kakopatheo_] occurs three times (James 5:13; 2 Tim 2:9; 4:5); [G4777, sugkakopatheo_] twice (2 Tim 1:8; 2:3). It does not simply refer to the suffering but to the fact that the sufferer does not "give in" to the suffering. (The "suffering" does not win!) James is referring to the typical way people respond to prophets (cf. Mt 5:12; 23:34, 37; Lk 11:49; Acts 7:52; 1 Thess 2:15). However, Jeremiah stands out as the classic case (Jer 20:2; 32:2; 38:6), especially since he struggled with his feelings towards his tormentors. But Elijah is also an excellent example (1 Kgs 19). I wonder if James expects some of the same treatment, since he, with this letter, is a prophetic voice, especially in this section (e.g., note the times "Behold!" [5:4, 9, 11] is used).
4. who spoke in the name of the Lord. The people who are true to the message given them by God should expect persecution. Jesus warned us that it would be so (Jn 15:18-25). People love those who will "tickle their ears" (2 Tim 4:3).

JAMES 5:11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

1. Behold. The Greek sentence starts with this word (left out in the NASB and NIV, but ESV retains it).
2. blessed. Recall James 1:12. However, the background is the message of Jesus: "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when {people} insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mt 5:10-12).
3. endured/endurance. (For comments about these words, see the introduction to this section.) It is interesting that James does not stick with the word *patience* as used above. But his focus here is not on patience with people, but endurance in situations. The ones saved are those who endure to the end (Mt 10:22; 24:13; Lk 21:19). See also Rom 15:4; Heb 10:35-39; 12:1-3.

4. endurance of Job. Actually Job did not have much patience with his "friends" (so called). But he did not give up (Job 1:21-22; 2:10; 13:15; 19:25-27). He had endurance.
5. the outcome [G5056, telos] of the Lord's {dealings}. The Greek word here [telos] has a wide range of meaning, but "outcome" appears to be a good choice here. The word "dealings" is not in the Greek sentence here. The story of Job is especially given so that we will see the outcome. God has purposes in mind in regard to our suffering (which we may never know), but, with the story of Job, we see that the outcome is good. However, we do not often get such a clear picture of "the dealings" of the Lord with us. We are to learn the lessons of Job and apply them to our personal experience. By faith, we are to trust God for the outcomes.
6. that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. Here is what we are expected to believe when we are suffering for His sake. Full of compassion [one word, G4184, polusplagchnos] is found only here in the NT. Merciful [G3629, oiktirmon] is found only three times in the NT. James is likely thinking OT passages such as Psa 103:8; 111:4. "YHWH is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness" (Psa 103:8). This description of YHWH appears often in the OT. See especially Exod 34:6-7 where YHWH uses these words to describe Himself.

JAMES 5:12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

1. It was quite common to close a letter with an oath. Perhaps James is thinking of this practice as he brings this letter to a close.
2. Teaching of Jesus. This verse is very close to a teaching by Jesus. "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord' (Deut 23:21-23). But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' {or} 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil" (Mt 5:33-37). It is interesting that James uses the present tense here, while the aorist tense is used in the corresponding passage in Matthew 5. This could be an indicator that James was dealing with an existing practice. However, it is also possible that he was alerting them of the danger of making a practice of swearing, while not denying the need for oaths at times.
3. Not all oaths were forbidden. If oaths were fundamentally evil, then God would not have used them. "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you'" (Heb 6:13-14; quoting Gen 22:17). "In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath" (Heb 6:17; cf. Gen 22:16-18; Psa 110:4; Isa 45:23). In this same passage the writer assumed that oaths are necessary at times. "For men swear by one greater {than themselves}, and with them an oath {given} as confirmation is an end of every dispute" (Heb 6:16). And it is expected that oaths are not forbidden in court (cf. Mt 26:63-64). On several occasions, Paul called on God as a witness (Rom 1:9; 2 Cor 1:21; 11:31; Gal 1:20; Phil 1:8).
4. What are some of the reasons why we should not swear?
 - a. What is the basis purpose of swearing? It is to verify our integrity. However, our integrity should not be based anywhere outside ourselves. "Do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath."
 - b. Why should it not be necessary? We should be consistently truthful in every situation. We do not need to add anything to a truthful statement. If we are people of integrity, then the statement can stand alone without any help. "But your yes is to be yes, and your no, no."
 - c. What is the fundamental harm in swearing? Oaths are harmful, since they imply that some statements can be trusted more than other statements. It allows a tendency for us to be "less than truthful" in statements made without an oath. I remember as children, we convinced ourselves that it was okay to lie if we had our fingers crossed. Do children still do this?
 - d. Why is it dangerous? "So that you may not fall under judgment." Careless use of oaths brings us in danger of taking God's name in vain (Exod 20:7). A statement such as "I promise to do it, so help me God" is very likely too casual a use of the name of God.

- 1) The danger goes even deeper than swearing. We will be held accountable for every idle word we speak. It does not have to contain an oath (Mt 12:34-37; Eph 4:29; 5:4; Col 3:8-9; cf. James 3:2-12; Lk 6:45; Mt 15:18-20).
- 2) It opens the door to actual cussing and cursing. During stressful times and especially in a moment of crisis, we are likely to pronounce God's judgment on others, situations, life in general, etc. if we have become too casual about swearing. My parents, in some of these tense moments, would say "Dad Gum It", so technically they were not using God's name (but we children knew what it really meant!).
5. But [de]. This word can either mean "but" indicating a contrast to the verse before it, or it can mean "and" merely showing a connection with it. Both NIV and NRSV ignore the problem by leaving the word out. "But" appears in NASB and ESV.
6. above all [G4253/3843, pro panto_n]. It literally means "before all things" clearly indicating a priority. But what type of priority? Is it more important than any of the exhortations in the teaching on patience and endurance? Or does it have a priority in the sense that it is more foundational than the previous exhortation? Yes and yes.
 - a. More Foundational. Central to the issue of swearing is the problem of integrity. Integrity is more foundational to our walk with God than patience and endurance. We will never develop patience and endurance without it.
 - b. More Important. Impatience is one problem area found in each of the issues raised so far in this chapter. People can become impatient with the lack of justice, and take it upon themselves to right wrongs (5:1-8). Or we can become impatient with fellow believers in the life and functioning of the church (5:9-11). Oaths are an expression of impatience with God, which makes it a more important problem than the others in this chapter. While there is a sense that any expression of impatience ultimately is being impatient with God, the misuse of oaths is much more directly an insult to Him.
 - c. More Serious. Even more serious, the habitual use of oaths makes blasphemy a real possibility. This is especially true since it is difficult to even come up with a clear definition of blasphemy. James has been dealing with situations where the readers do not easily recognize the seriousness of what they are doing. He has saved this one for last.

JAMES 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? {Then} he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

1. James now supplies us with a much better response to situations than those explored in the examples above: retaliation, ill-feelings, swearing, etc. Prayer is the proper response to these situations as well as many others. And songs of praise are an excellent outlet for cheerfulness.
2. suffering [G2553, kakopatheo_]. It is the verb form of the word used for suffering in 5:10 [G2552, kakopatheia]. This term is far more general than the situation addressed in the next verse. Here James is referring to a wide range of calamities. The ones just studied (e.g., mistreatment by the rich) would be in the set. However, it would include almost anything that cause distress in people. And really, the focus here is on this distress, not on the cause of it. How should we respond when we encounter distress? Pray.
3. must pray. We need to cry out to God for remedies, not seek them on our own. Even our attempts to ignore distress are wrong. Should we choose to take a positive attitude about distressful situations? No! Striving for a positive attitude that does not bring God directly into the situation is just another expression of those attempts to solve it with our own abilities. Such responses deny God's call for humility in our lives (James 4:6, 10).
4. cheerful. Found only here and at Acts 27:22, 25.
5. sing praises. Perhaps the story that comes to mind for most people is that of Paul and Silas singing in prison (Acts 16:25). See also Eph 5:17-20; Rom 15:9.
6. Bad times and good times. In this verse, James reminds us that we have bad times and good times. In bad situations, we should say with the psalmist: "I am prayer" (109:4b). But we must not forget God in the good times. Sing praises for all the blessings you are receiving. And for the many you don't know about. Actually, praise is another form of prayer.

ANOINTING WITH OIL

Before we consider James 5:14-20, I want to review the topic of anointing with oil. People and things were anointed with oil in the OT to make them holy, i.e., set apart unto God.

A. THINGS.

1. The tabernacle and its furnishings (Ex 30:22-28; 40:9-10; Lev 8:11) were set apart for service.
2. Shields (2 Sam 1:21; Isa 21:5) were consecrated for war (perhaps).
3. Pillars (Gen 28:18; 35:14). Jacob set up a pillar and poured oil over it, perhaps to indicate that the place was especially holy because Jacob had met YHWH there.

B. PEOPLE. People were anointed with oil, indicating their appointment and consecration for office. Symbolically it represented the outpouring of the Spirit (empowering, enlightening, etc.) for service.

1. Priests were anointed (Ex 28:41; 29:7-9; 30:29-30; 40:12-15; Lev 8:1-12, 30; 10:7; 21:10; Psa 133:2).
2. Kings were anointed: Saul (1 Sam 10:1); David (1 Sam 16:1, 3, 13; 2 Sam 2:4; Psa 89:20) Solomon (1 Kgs 1:34, 39); Jehu (1 Kgs 19:16; 2 Kgs 9:1-13); Joash (2 Kgs 11:12); others (Jdg 9:8). David would not kill or allow his men to kill Saul, since Saul was "YHWH's anointed" (1 Sam 24:6-7; 26:9-11, 16, 23).
3. Prophets were anointed: Elisha (1 Kgs 19:16); patriarchs, prophets (Psa 105:15; 1 Chron 16:22).
4. Messiah (Psa 45:7; Isa 61:1; Heb 1:9)
5. Cyrus (Isa 45:1)
6. The nation Israel (Ezk 16:9)
7. People were anointed for cleansing, not healing (Lev 14:17-18, 28).

C. OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Anointing with oil is closely tied to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Note, however, that oil is not mentioned in every one of the following references; perhaps it is assumed when not stated.

1. "Is Saul also among the prophets" (1 Sam 10:6-13; 19:18-24)?
2. David (1 Sam 16:13)
3. Messiah (Psa 45:7; Isa 61:1)
4. My two anointed ones (Zech 4:1-14)

D. ANOINTING IN THE NT. Oil was used as a medicine (cf. Lk 10:34) but the word "anoint" is not used in the application (at least I did not find it anywhere).

1. [G218b, alepho_]. Found nine times. Oil is used in all situations.
 - a. care of body (Mt 6:17)
 - b. sinful woman honoring Jesus (Lk 7:38, 46)
 - c. host failing to honor Jesus as his guest (Lk 7:46)
 - d. Mary anointing the feet of Jesus (Jn 11:2; 12:3)
 - e. Women came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus (Mk 16:1)
 - f. anointing in conjunction with casting out demons and healing the sick (Mk 6:13)
 - g. Elders are called to anoint believers (who are sick/weak/weary) in the name of the Lord (James 5:14)
2. [G5548, chrio_]. Found five times. Oil is never mentioned.
 - a. anointing of Jesus by God (Lk 4:18 [quoting Isa 61:1]; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb 1:9 [quoting Psa 45:7])
 - c. "anointed us in God" (2 Cor 1:21). It is difficult to determine meaning of this verse. However, the sealing and pledge of the Spirit are mentioned in the very next verse.
3. [G5545, chrisma]. Found three times. All three refer to the anointing of believers by the Holy Spirit (1 Jn 2:20, 27, 27). No mention of oil is made.
4. [G3462, murizo_]. Found one time. "She has anointed my body beforehand for the burial" (Mk 14:8). It refers to the anointing of Jesus by Mary at Passover Week. Note that the Greek word in #1 is used in the gospel of John to describe that same incident.

E. OIL AND HEALING. I have found only two references where oil and healing are closely associated (Mk 6:13; James 5:14). "And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with

oil many sick people [G732, arro_stes] and healing [G2323, therapeuo_] them" (Mk 6:13). This verse is found in the story where Jesus sent out the Twelve (Mk 6:7-13). He gave them authority over unclean spirits (Mk 6:7), but healing of the sick is not mentioned in the instructions in Mark. However, authority to heal is given in the two parallel accounts, but no mention is made in them of the use of oil (Mt 10:1-15; Lk 9:1-6, 10). The same is true when Jesus sent out the Seventy (Lk 10:1-20). Something interesting is included in the instruction to the Seventy: "... and heal [G2323, therapeuo_] those in it who are sick [G772, asthene_s], and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Lk 10:9).

F. POST-BIBLICAL. The early and medieval church practiced anointing for new believers as well as at the end of life in Extreme Unction with a fair amount of consistency. I am told that there are reference in the early church to anointing of the sick, but I do not know the details of the practice. I would be interested in knowing the beginning of the practice we have today of anointing anyone and everyone who requested anointing for healing (of any type).

"SICK" AND "HEALING"

How well do the verses examined above match with our verses in James? "Is anyone among you sick [G770, astheneo_]? {Then} he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14); and the prayer offered in faith will restore [G4982, so_zo_] the one who is sick [G2577, kamno_], and the Lord will raise [G1453, egeiro_] him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him" (James 5:15).

In the first "sick" James used the typical word [G770, astheneo_], but the second "sick" [G2577, kamno_] is unusual, being found only at James 5:15 and Heb 12:3. The basic meaning of the first is "to be weak", "feeble", etc. while "to grow weary" is the basic meaning of the second word. One problem we have in interpretation is that the words translated "sick" in the NT all have a wider range of meaning than the meaning of "sick" in our culture. The NT does have a word with a narrower meaning [G3554, nosos], but it is used only 11 times being translated "disease(s)" in every case. Of the related terms, one is found only once [G3553, nose_ma], and another occurs as "morbid interest" twice [G3552, noseo_].

Also, James does not use the typical word for healing [G2323, therapeuo_ = to cure]. Instead he uses a word which normally is translated "to save" [G4982, so_zo_] (translated "restore" in the NASB). It is translated "save, saved, etc." ca. 89 times in the NT. It is translated "made well", etc. only ca. 13 times. It may not be significant, but it certainly is interesting to examine the situations in the NT where this word "to save" [so_zo_] is used when people are made well. In essentially every case, the people are made well as a result of their faith. Faith is mentioned in the following situations where *so_zo_* [G4982] is used: woman with a hemorrhage (Mt 9:21-22; Mk 5:34; Lk 8:48); healing of the daughter of Jairus (Mk 5:23; Lk 8:50), a blind man (Mk 10:52; Lk 18:42); Samaritan leper (Lk 17:19); lame man (Acts 14:9). Faith is not mentioned (but could still be a key factor) in the demon-possessed man (Lk 8:36); the lame man in temple (Acts 4:9); and those who touched the fringe of His cloak (Mk 6:56). And, of course, it is found in James 5:15 (in association with faith!). It would appear to me that the word is used only for healing when the requirement is more than having faith that Jesus can heal them. It requires faith in the person Jesus (not just in what He can do). If this is not "saving faith" then it must be very close to it! Isn't it possible that for these people, the kingdom has arrived, it has not just "come near to you" (Lk 10:9)?

I would like to briefly look at the word used for *sick* in Mk 6:13 (the only other passage that mentions oil). It might not have any bearing on our passage (James 5:14-15), since James does not use the word. This word [G732, arro_stos] basically means not strong, feeble, sickly. It is translated "sick" in the four times it occurs in the NT (Mt 14:14; Mk 6:5, 13; 1 Cor 11:30). In the first two reference, no other description is given of those being healed. However, the Corinthian passage is interesting. The context is the abuse of the Lord's Supper. "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must

examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak [G772, asthene_s] and sick [G732, arro_stes], and a number sleep" (1 Cor 11:27). "Weak" [G772, asthene_s] here basically means "without strength" and is related to the word commonly used (see above) for "sick" [G770, astheneo_] although both are translated "weak" often. "Sick" [G732, arro_stes] here is the word we are specifically examining just now (i.e., found in Mk 6:13 in association with anointing). I think it is very likely that this situation in Corinth could be similar to what James is picturing as he writes James 5:14-15. James also uses two different words. One [G770, astheneo_] is basically the same as in the Corinthian passage [G772, asthene_s] (verb and noun). Although, to add to the confusion, NASB translates it as "weak" in 1 Cor 11:30 and as "sick" in James 5:14. Unfortunately for where I am going with this, James does not use the other word from 1 Cor 11:30 [G732, arro_stes]. He uses a very unusual word [G2577, kamno_] instead. In fact, both words are quite rare in the NT (4x and 2x). Although it is impossible to decide with certainty, I think James actually is picturing a situation similar to that at Corinth. This position is greatly strengthened (I think) by the fact that James uses two very different words of "sick" (neither of which must be translated "sick") with the second (and most important one) deliberately chosen (I think) so that it would not be translated "sick" (but most all translations did it anyway!). So my viewpoint might again be a minority of one! Remember, the only other place this word appears in the NT, it is not associated with illness at all. "For consider Him [Jesus] who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary [G2577, kamno_] and lose heart" (Heb 12:3).

SOME REMAINING QUESTIONS!

Don't you wish I would stop all this nonsense and get on with looking at the verses! However, I still have questions. In fact, it is the existence of some of these questions that started me on this journey.

A. QUESTIONS.

1. Why are the elders of the church called for this healing? Nowhere in the Bible is the gift of healing given as a qualification to be an elder. The basic function of elders was administrative as well as the spiritual well-being of individuals. By contrast, "signs and wonders and miracles" (2 Cor 12:12) were given to verify the calling of an apostle (cf. Rom 15:19).
2. Why is there no mention of calling people with the gifts of healing (cf. 1 Cor 12:9, 28-30)?
3. Why is there no mention of the laying on of hands? There are several functions involved in this action.
 - a. Healing by Jesus and apostles (Mk 5:23; 6:5; 7:32; 8:23, 25; 16:18; Lk 4:40; 13:13; Acts 28:8).
 - b. Appointment to office (Num 8:10; 27:18; Dt 34:9; Acts 6:6; 13:3)
 - c. Giving of Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-19; 19:6)
 - d. Spiritual gift (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6)
 - e. A combination. When Ananias laid hands on Saul [Paul], Saul was healed, the Holy Spirit was given, and it might even indicated the appointment to the office of apostle (Acts 9:10-19). Heb 6:2 is possibly a general statement (perhaps including all the above).
4. Why not call for a doctor? This question is probably not important, but it is interesting that the use of doctors is not mentioned.
5. How can James speak with such confidence that restoration will happen? The possibility of failure is not even considered! I think that this is a very significant question, and, frankly, it has plagued me all my life as a Christian. Most everyone who has been a Christian for long can name some wonderful Christian who have never been healed. To question their faith is truly an insult! If Paul himself was not healed (2 Cor 12:7-10; cf. 2 Tim 4:20), then why should we believe that God is going to heal everyone who follows the procedures outlined in James 5?

B. SOME POSSIBLE ANSWERS. No doubt, many will disagree with the answers I give here. I do not give them as the only possible interpretation, but as one which, I hope, is worthy of consideration. Before you read some of my radical ideas, please know that I believe in divine healing, and that there

are no limitations on God. The possibility of healing is for everyone. Also, I am not advocating the removal of time-honored methods for receiving assistance in healing.

1. Let's start with the most troubling question (for me at least). How can James be so confident that restoration will take place? No other answers come to me but that he is limiting the restoration to a type of "sickness" where it always works if the condition (faith) is met. Before you raise the question, let me eliminate the opinion held by some that any person can be healed if only that person has enough faith. Such an opinion cannot stand the test; there is simply too much evidence against it. (And it is such a heart breaker for sincere Christians.)
 - a. A Biblical Perspective. A serious study of healing in the Bible shows us that physical healing has a very low priority. Healing is basically used as one of the miraculous signs provided at the beginning of new ministries. During the earthly ministry of Jesus there were massive healings. In the early days of the church (the beginning chapters of Acts) many healings took place. For example, Peter and Paul performed many healings. When a new work was started, typically healings were recorded. But the number of healing diminishes as we move through the book of Acts. And healings are rarely mentioned in the epistles. Missionaries in the modern era experience the same thing (i.e., many miracles in the early days of a new field).
 - b. The context of James 5. Let's put these verses (5:14-15) in the context. Ever since 4:11 (at least), James has been dealing with misconceptions of the seriousness of various failures people make in living the Christian life. Now he is addressing some of the consequences of these failures. What are these consequences? There are found in the choice of words by James: weak, feeble [G770, *astheneo*] and weary [G2577, *kamno*]. (Granted, it is possible to translate them as "sick" but they need not be translated that way.) In fact *astheneo* [G770] is translated "weak" fourteen times in the NASB. The people being addressed are part of the local fellowship of believers ("anyone among you"). I think James is dealing with the same type of problem Paul addresses in 1 Cor 11:30, but not likely the very same problem. As a result of certain failures in their lives these people have become spiritually weak, feeble and weary, perhaps even ill. This type of "illness" is always curable providing there is a proper response of faith - especially if this "faith" is balanced with "works" (see 2:14-26).
 - c. I am well aware of another popular reason offered in the case where healing does not take place. Some people emphasize that the "prayer of faith" can only be prayed at times when it is empowered by the Holy Spirit. So, if healing does not happen, it simply means that the Spirit was not in the prayer. I find this proposed reason not only unacceptable but insulting to God.
2. With this new perspective, we now have some insight into why the elders have been called.
 - a. A primary task for elders. This is not the place to make a study of the office of elder. However, we need mention only one of their responsibilities here. "Obey [lit. be persuaded by] your leaders and submit {to them}, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you" (Heb 13:17). They must keep watch over the souls of the congregation.
 - b. The elders. It is not just one elder who is being called but "the elders" - all of them. The reason is that it is their corporate responsibility to question individuals regarding their spiritual life. They are to determine the problem and seek to persuade the person to respond accordingly. And faith is an essential aspect of that response. The text shows us the two possibilities. A person could have simply been mistaken as to the seriousness of the failures taking place. Or the weakness is actually the result of sin. In either case, restoration is possible if the person responds properly to the elders.
 - c. In the name of the Lord. Jesus gave this authority with the church: "If you forgive the sins of any, {their sins} have been forgiven them; if you retain the {sins} of any, they have been retained" (John 20:23).
3. Anointing with oil. It is likely that I will miss this one somewhat, but maybe I can get close. Here are some thoughts.
 - a. Early church practice. I think the practice of the early church of anointing new believers is a carry-over for what was taking place in the NT church. The anointing with oil of people who needed restoration (remember this Greek word means "to save") assures them that they are members in good standing in the Church of Jesus Christ.

- b. OT background. The oil also indicates that they are set apart (holy) for service in the kingdom. In this case, it is a return to a life of obedience - a productive life lost in the feebleness and weariness of their failures. It means that these people again have the basic qualification for service within the community of believers. They are again children of light (Eph 5:6-21; 1 John 1:5-10).
 - c. Appointment and consecration for office. God does not restore these individuals for their own benefit. The oil is an oil of consecration for service in the local fellowship of believers and under the authority of its leaders.
 - d. Holy Spirit. The oil could also mean that the Holy Spirit is again active in these lives.
 - e. How about some wild speculation? It seems reasonable that anointing with oil is somewhat parallel to the water of baptism. However, baptism only happened once, since, at one level, it is a reenactment of the death and resurrection of Jesus. On the other hand, anointing with oil could have taken place several times. For example, when people stumble and need to be restored, the anointing with oil gave them a way of rededicating themselves to worship and service. The ritual provided some needed assurance.
 - f. Since some might raise the issue, let me consider the only other place in the NT where anointing oil is mentioned (Mk 6:7-13). We have already addressed this passage above. The focus (in Mark's gospel) of the sending of the Twelve is having authority over unclean spirits (6:7). So the first thing mentioned is that "they were casting out many demons" (6:13). Then they were anointing many sick with oil. I think this involved identification with the kingdom (setting them apart). The last mentioned is the healing.
4. Prayer of faith. Whose faith?
- a. First it must be the faith of the individual, a faith which includes affirmation of, trust in, and obedience to Jesus.
 - b. Second, the elders will pray over the person. This prayer will be "in the name of the Lord" (see above). It is the pray of faith of the elders, acting as the representatives of God, praying the prayer of assured forgiveness.
 - c. It is the spiritual health of the church and its members where the real priority lies. The "prayer of faith" will always result in spiritual healing.

JAMES 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? {Then} he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

JAMES 5:15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

1. Many of the issues here have already been discussed. See above for more details.
2. anyone among you. James is referring to members of a local fellowship of believers.
3. sick in 5:14 [G770, *astheneo*]. This basic meaning of this word is to being weak or feeble. It can refer to weakness of any kind. It is translated "weak" a number of times in the NASB (e.g., Rom 4:19; 1 Cor 8:9; 2 Cor 11:29). I am not deny that there can be physical illness also. But such an illness is the result of spiritual sickness.
3. sick in 5:15 [G2577, *kamno*]. It is found only at James 5:15 and Heb 12:3. The basic meaning is "to grow weary" (Heb 12:3). See discussion above.
4. call for. The person needing help should initiate the action by requesting an examination from the elders. This however would not be a firm requirement. No doubt, elders could ask for a meeting.
5. elders of the church. There are several references to elders in the NT (e.g., Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:1). It is basically an administrative office. However, they were especially responsible for the overall spiritual welfare of individuals within the fellowship. See above for more details.
6. Response by elders. James gives three parts to the response by the elders: (a) prayer, (b) anointing, (c) calling on God.
7. pray over [ep]. Perhaps this action included the laying on of hands. See above for more details.
8. in the name of the Lord. Here we see the elders acting as God's representative. They are not begging Him to do something. They are acting in faith, reinstating people back into the grace of God.

9. prayer offered in faith. This includes both the prayer by the individual and that of the elders. See above.
10. restore [G4982, so_zo_]. It literally means "to save" and it is translated "save, saved, etc." ca. 89 times in the NT and "made well", etc. ca. 13 times. See above.
11. raise him up. He is raised up, not just back to health, but back into full service for his Lord.
12. committed sin... forgiven. If the failures of these people include the committing on sin, then sin will be included in the forgiveness offered.

JAMES 5:16a Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.

1. Therefore. This word ties these verses (5:16-18) to 5:13-15, and especially 5:15.
2. sins. James expands from discussing sin related to physical issues (weakness, weariness, sickness, etc.) to all types of sins that bring on physical and/or spiritual illness.
3. to one another. He also expands from the use of elders to anyone within the congregation. This verse helps provide a basis for a doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Confession can be to any believer, and the prayer of any believer is acceptable to God.
4. confess your sins. Discretion needs to be made in the confession of sins to anyone other than God. We should seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit before acting. Far more important than your confession of sin to another is the spiritual well-being of that person or persons. Before you make public confession, make sure that it honors God and is not simply a way of honoring yourself for your honesty! Too much "honesty" about our failures so often removes the focus from God to the person confessing. When such "honesty" is given for the purpose of easing one's guilt, then it is not honoring God. Such "honesty" also places a burden on those hearing the confession. It is really a demand that the hearers forgive and accept you the way you are (if they want to remain in fellowship with you). To some degree, we are all prisoners to our background. When such a decision has been forced upon them, some will simply back away from the relationship.
5. pray for one another so that you may be healed. This encouragement to pray for one another would include the ongoing prayer for the person's well-being (physical, spiritual, etc.). However, there is also a focus here on providing specific help for the person with the prayer of repentance and faith, so that the person will be healed spiritually (along with any related physical illness) and return to a clear fellowship with God and other believers.

JAMES 5:16b The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

1. Although most scholars would agree that James is saying something about prayer being powerful, they consider this sentence one of the most difficult to translate with any great precision. Since I am a long way from being a Greek scholar, I don't think I am going to be able to help much. The Greek sentence looks like this: *polu ischuei dee_sis dikaiou energoumene_*. What does it mean?
2. *polu* [G4183, *polus*]. A primary word meaning *much* or *many*.
3. *ischuei* [G2480, *ischuo_*]. This word is derived from a word meaning *strength* or *might* and perhaps means something like *powerful*.
4. *dee_sis* [G1162, *dee_sis*]. A word meaning *petition*, *entreaty*, *supplication*, etc. It is not the typical word used for prayer [G4335, *proseuche_*]. It is not even the one used in 5:15 [G2171, *euche_*]. I think "prayer" is not a good translation here. James appears to be focused more on *supplication* (only one aspect of prayer).
5. *dikaiou* [G1342, *dikaiois*]. *Righteous* in this context is focused on relationships. The righteous person is a person in right relationship with all people, especially with God and those within the fellowship of believers.
6. *energoumene_* [G1754, *energeo_*]. "To be at work" [*en(at)*, *ergo(work)*] is the basic meaning of this word. It is placed last in the sentence for emphasis. One might guess that James means something like *operational* or *functional*.
7. "When supplication from a righteous person is really working (operational), it is powerful" might be what James means.

JAMES 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

JAMES 5:18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

1. he prayed earnestly [lit. he prayed with prayer]. James recalls the life of Elijah to encourage us in our supplications. His petitions both stopped the rain over an entire nation, and then they brought the rains again. It is not that he prayed with great fervor; it is simply that he prayed (knowing that God answers when asked).
2. a man with a nature like ours. James is saying that all people in right relationship with God should expect their petitions to be answered. Too often, when we do not get the results we expect from prayer, we think (a) "There is something wrong with me", and (b) "I don't know how to pray" (i.e., I don't know the secret of getting results). James is encouraging us that neither is true. Both of these conditions are easily met by any Christian. (Remember that Jesus said we only needed the faith as tiny as a mustard seed.) How God chooses to answer our prayer is His business. It is not our fault. For example, millions of Christians today are praying for a great awakening to take place. Perhaps, One day God will respond to the prayers of one small group of "nobodies" and break forth. But that does not mean that the prayers of millions were wrong or that the prayers of the small group were somehow exceptional.

JAMES 5:19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,

JAMES 5:20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

1. Theological issues. Take care. Here is a passage where people's theology complicates the interpretation. Too often, people allow their theology to dictate the message. I will try not to get into a debate over theology, but I want to really know what James wants to say to us. If I have not said this before, let me say it now. One of the truly great values to the book of James is that it corrects some of the mistakes people make in trying to understand Paul's teachings. This is one of the reasons Luther called this book "an epistle of straw" (because it challenged the way Luther wanted to interpret Paul!).

You can find many complicated interpretations to these verses in various commentaries, since people see the need to explain what James is saying here in light of their personal theology. I neither plan to list all the various theories nor to explain why I do not agree with them. I will give what I see as a simple, straight-forward interpretation of these verses.

2. My brethren. I think James starts with this clear definition so that we know he is addressing everyone within the congregation.
3. If any among you. He now doubly makes his point. It appears that the situation he will describe here could happen to anyone in the congregation. A key issue under debate is whether or not the straying person is a true believer or not. What James is saying here does not depend upon the answer to that question. The entire practical section (James 4-5) has been about people being deceived regarding the seriousness of their actions. So everyone should take heed. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (1 Cor 10:12). (Read 1 Cor 10:1-14. The entire passage is about falling away.)
4. strays [G4105, planao_]. The obvious message here is about people who are backsliding. These people have committed apostasy. It is a consistent theme in the whole Bible. Here are a few references (Ezk 18:24; 33:18 [read 18:1-32; 33:10-20]; Mt 24:4-5, 10-11; Mk 13:5-6; 2 Thess 2:11; 2 Tim 3:13; 4:10; Heb 6:1-8; 1 Pet 2:25; 2 Pet 2:15-22).
5. from the truth. These people have strayed from the central and necessary affirmations of their faith. It is the word of truth which brings life when it is operating in the soul (1:18)
6. turns a sinner from the error of his way. See the confession of sin mentioned in 5:15-16.
7. save his soul from death. The insertion of *soul* here shows us that James is writing about spiritual death, not physical death. Recall an earlier statement: "in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21; cf. 1:15; Jn 5:24; Jude 1:22-23).
8. cover a multitude of sins. Although some disagree, I think the sins being covered are those of the people who have strayed from the truth. All sins are forgiven when people return to or find saving faith. However, the emphasis is not on the lifestyles of wanderers, but on the grace

extended to them. "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! (Psa 32:1). "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8; quoting Prov 10:12). "Who is a God [El] like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18-19).

The church must not remember against the redeemed, what God Himself has forgiven and forgotten.

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,
Yonder on Calvary's mount out-poured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt!

Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,
Threaten the soul with infinite loss,
Grace that is greater, yes grace untold,
Points to the refuge, the mighty cross.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide,
What can avail to wash it away?
Look! there is flowing a crimson tide;
Whiter than snow you may be today.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe!
You that are longing to see His face,
Will you this moment His grace receive?

Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within!
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin!

Julia H. Johnston, *Grace Greater than Our Sin*