

Teacher: Vinnie Angelo, M.A. | **Dates:** 7/12/15 - 8/16/15 | **Room:** W246/247 | **Time:** 10:55am

Class Description: *James: The Intersection of Faith and Works*

During our 6-week class we will study through the New Testament book of James. We will explore how James encourages Christians to deal with such topics as: adversity in life, the role of works and faith, seeking out the wisdom of God, and the importance of showing justice towards the marginalized. This class will also help train people (from mature believers to brand new Christians) in various Bible study methods, with the purpose of equipping all to grow in their ability to read, study, and understand the scriptures.

Contact Vinnie: VinnieAngelo@gmail.com or TheologyClass.org

Recommended reading during the class

Read through *James* each week (every day if possible)

- Do this in at least three translations over the course of the class (e.g., ESV, NIV, NLT)

Read through the *Sermon on the Mount* each week

- Matthew chapters 5-7

Read through the book of *Proverbs* (chapters 1-31)

Recommended books on biblical justice

"Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just" by Timothy Keller (2010)

- (optional; Keller surveys a biblical view of doing "justice")

"When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself" by Steve Corbett (2012)

- (optional; Corbett provides a biblically based framework concerning the root causes of poverty and its alleviation while giving pragmatic and healthy solutions)

"Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream" by David Platt (2010)

- (optional; Platt challenges American Christians to examine how society has manipulated the gospel to fit our cultural preferences).

Recommended commentaries on James:

"The Letter of James" (Douglas Moo), Pillar New Testament Commentary (2000)

- A scholarly commentary, focuses on more technical elements

"James" (David Nystrom), NIV Application Commentary (1997)

- Has a good balance of scholarly notes with practical application

"Exalting Jesus in James" (David Platt), Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (2014)

- A very readable, non-technical commentary by pastor David Platt

Recommended tools for biblical studies

"Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary" by Tremper Longman III (2013)

- A solid, contemporary, Bible dictionary that provides articles on historical and theological topics

"The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament within Its Cultural Context" by Gary M. Burge (2009)

- A great New Testament survey that focuses on the historic/cultural issues of the 1st cent.

Outline

I. Greeting (1:1)

II. The Testing of Faith (1:2–18)

- A. Joy in trials (1:2–4)
- B. Wisdom from God for trials (1:5–8)
- C. The place of rich and poor before God (1:9–11)
- D. Reward for those who endure (1:12)
- E. The process of temptation (1:13–18)

III. Hearing and Doing the Word (1:19–27)

- A. Hearers of the word (1:19–21)
- B. Doers of the word (1:22–25)
- C. True, practical religion (1:26–27)

IV. The Sin of Partiality (2:1–13)

- A. Preferring the wealthy over the poor in the assembly (2:1–7)
- B. The royal law of love (2:8–11)
- C. Acting in light of judgment (2:12–13)

V. Faith without Works Is Dead (2:14–26)

- A. Faith without works (2:14–17)
- B. Response of a critic (2:18–20)
- C. Examples of Abraham and Rahab (2:21–26)

VI. The Sin of Dissension in the Community (3:1–4:12)

- A. Taming the tongue (3:1–12)
- B. The solution: wisdom from above (3:13–18)
- C. Warning against worldliness (4:1–12)

VII. The Sins of the Wealthy (4:13–5:12)

- A. Boasting about tomorrow (4:13–17)
- B. Warning to the rich (5:1–6)
- C. Patience in suffering (5:7–12)

VIII. The Prayer of Faith (5:13–18)

IX. Concluding Admonition (5:19–20)

Background information taken from

- "New Testament Introduction" (Carson, Moo)
- "The Letter of James" The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Moo)
- "Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament" (Beale, Carson)
- "ESV Study Bible"
- "NIV Application Commentary: James" (Nystrom)
- "Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just" (Keller)
- "When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself" (Corbett, Fikkert)

Echoes of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in James (from ESV Study Bible)

James	Teaching	Matthew
1:2	<i>joy amid trials</i>	5:10-12
1:4	<i>exhortation to be perfect</i>	5:48
1:5	<i>asking God for good things</i>	7:7-11
1:17	<i>God the giver of good</i>	7:11
1:20	<i>against anger</i>	5:22
1:22	<i>hearers and doers of the word</i>	7:24-27
2:5	<i>poor inherit the kingdom</i>	5:3, 5
2:10	<i>keeping the whole law</i>	5:19
2:13	<i>merciful receive mercy</i>	5:7
3:12	<i>know them by their fruits</i>	7:16
3:18	<i>blessings of peacemakers</i>	5:9
4:2-3	<i>ask and you will receive</i>	7:7-8
4:4	<i>serving God vs. friendship with the world</i>	6:24
4:9-10	<i>consolation for mourners</i>	5:4
4:11-12	<i>against judging others</i>	7:1-5
4:13-14	<i>living for today</i>	6:34
5:2-5	<i>moth and rust spoiling earthly treasures</i>	6:19
5:10	<i>prophets as examples and patterns</i>	5:12
5:12	<i>against oaths</i>	5:33-37

I. 1:1 Introduction

James is the "*brother of the Lord*"

- 1 Cor 15 (Named specifically as being appeared to)
 - Probably James the brother of Jesus (James the Just)
 - John 7:5 (Feast of Booths/Tabernacles) (Mt 13:55)
- He was the leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts)
 - Gal 1:18-19; Acts 12:17; Acts 21:18; Acts 15 (Jerusalem Council)
- Martyred in AD 62

Purpose of James' letter:

- "If one is following the Messiah, then one will live out the Messiah's ethic, and you'll do so in the Messiah's community" -Dalrymple
 - James 2:8 Royal Law: You shall love your neighbor as yourself
 - Deuteronomy 6:4-8
 - Lev 19:18
 - And so the ethic of God's People is first lived out in God's Community
- "*Servant*" language
 - OT imagery of the prophet: Moses (Num 12:7); David (1 Sam 19:4); Prophets (Amos 3:7) (Jer 7:25) (Is 20:3); Nation of Israel (Is 41:8) But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
- "*Twelve Tribes in the Dispersion*"
 - Yahweh promised He would re-gather the exiled People
 - (Is 11:11-12; Jer 31:8-14; Ez 37:21-22; Zech 10:6-12)
 - 12 apostles suggests = bring into being this eschatological Israel
 - Mt 19:28 (Cf. Lk 22:30)
 - By calling his readers the "12-Tribes" James is claiming that they constitute the true People of God of the "last days"
- "*Diaspora*" lit. "scattered among the nations"
 - (Jn 7:35; 2 Macc 1:27)
 - Peter (1 Pt 1:1) when he is writing to almost all Gentiles
 - Christians who live in this world, apart from their true, heavenly, "homeland"

II. 1:2-17 The Pursuit of Spiritual Wholeness: The Opportunity Afforded by Trials

A. 1:2 -4 Enduring Trials Brings Spiritual Maturity

James begins by exhortation; tough times believers are facing were a key reason for James' writing "Brother" (and "my dear Brothers") (1:16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9-10, 12, 19)

"Joy" can be translated "pure joy"

"Trials"

- *"Why God"*
 - *David (Ps 13:1):*
 - *Isaiah (6:11)*
 - *Habakkuk (1:2)*
 - *The People of God who've been killed for their testimony (Rev 6:10)*
- *Trial/peirasmos:*
 - 1. outward trial or process of "testing" (1 Pt 4:12)
 - 2. inner enticement to sin "temptation/temp" (1 Tim 6:9)
- *The context of v2 means "trial"*
 - 1. Trials of poverty (1:9-11; 2:1-7; 2:15-17; 4:13-5:11)
 - 2. Religious persecution
 - 3. Rich people slandering the name of Christ, were exploiting the Christians
 - 4. "Killing" the righteous by withholding wages from them

"the testing of your faith produces steadfastness"

- *God uses trials to perfect our faith and make us stronger Christians*
 - *Rom 5:3-4; 1 Pt 1:6-7*
- *Revelation = overcome/conquer (νικᾶω) = 17 times (of 28 NT uses)*

"let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing"

B. 1:5-8 Wholeness Requires Wisdom, Which God Gives to All Who Ask in Faith

Wisdom: is the quality needed if God's people are going to endure trials with fortitude and godliness

- James is echoing OT/Jewish Wisdom teachings (Prov 2:6) echo of Mt 7:7

"he is a double-minded man"

- OT parallels are: Ps 119:2 (pursue God with a "whole heart") etc.

C. 1:9-11 Both Poor and Rich Christians Need to View Themselves as God Does

Two main options for identification (who are the rich):

- 1. James is encouraging this brother to not take pride in his wealth, but in his identity in Christ
- 2. The rich person is a non-Christian (the theme through the book)

Boast = boasting is not always wrong (it is the object of the boast)

- *rich* often had a negative connotation
 - Lk 6:23-24; 16:19-31
 - the oppressors of the People of God (Cf. Isa 5:14; Ja 2:1-6; 5:1-6)

D. 1:12-18 God Rewards the Person Who Endures Trials, but Never Tempts People to Sin

Trial = vv 2, 12; *persevere* = v 12, vv3-4

Blessing formulas:

- Ps 1:1 & Mt 5:3-12

Trials/Temptation:

- James' concern = help Christians to resist temptation that comes with trials
 - Financial trials = question God's providence
 - Death of loved one = question God's love
 - Suffering of the righteous poor/ease of wicked rich = question God's justice/existence
- The OT has God bringing trials into the lives of His People
 - Abraham (Gen 22:1)
- (v 14) James places the responsibility for sin on the individual
 - Gen 3:14 ; 2 Cor 11:3; Mt 6:13; Jn 17:15; 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Jn 2:13-14; Rev 12:9

"firstfruits" is a customary way of denoting Christians in the NT

- 2 Thes 2:13; Rev 14:4; Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:15
- God is redeeming creation:
 - Col 1:19-20; Rm 8:11-25; 2 Cor 5:18-20

III. 1:19-2:26 The Evidence of Spiritual Wholeness: Obedience to the World

Obedience to God involves:

- *Word* of God (1:21-23)
- *Law* (1:25; 2:8-12)
- *Works* (2:14,17-18, 20-22, 24-26)

A. 1:19-20 Hasty Speech and Anger Do Not Please God

speech and anger: Jewish wisdom teaching: Prov 17:28 (cf. 10:19; 11:12-13; 13:3); Sir 5:11-13

"for" gives purpose

- *righteousness* = the way things ought to be
- *justice* = what needs to be done to restore/bring about righteousness
 - **Paul:** an activity of God by which he puts people in right relationship with himself.
 - **James:** read against the background of the OT and the teachings of Jesus

B. 1:21-27 Obedience to the Word Is the Mark of Genuine Christianity

Theme: Those who've experienced new birth must accept that word by doing it

"put away" = to take off or lay aside. Take off the moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent

"the implanted word" = the word has the power to save (v 21) and to regenerate (v 18) = the gospel

- Jer 31:33; Ez 36:24-32

"which is able save your souls" (NIV *which can*)

- Rom. 10:9; Eph. 2:8; 1Cor. 1:18

"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only"

- The idea = since we have new hearts and have access to God's word we are enabled (and obligated) to act
 - Rom 2:13; Lk 11:28

"The perfect law, the law of liberty" (NIV: the perfect law that gives freedom)

- Usually the Law of Moses (Torah): the perfect Law (Ps 19:7)
- James = the *Law* reinterpreted through Jesus (Sermon On the Mount)
 - Jesus fulfills the Law (didn't abolish it) Mt 5:17-20
 - It's written on our hearts (Jer 31)

Three ways to obey the word. "accept the word" (v 21) becomes "do the word" (v 22) which becomes "do the law." Here are three ways in which believers can do the word/law

- 1. controlling the *tongue* (1:19-20; 3:1-12; 4:11-12)
- 2. concern for the "*helpless*" (2:1-13, 15-16; 5:1-6)
- 3. avoidance of "*worldliness*" (4:4-10)
 - True Religion Micah 6:8
- A mark of Israel's obedience was to show concern for helpless people
 - Ex 22:22; Deut 14:29; Is 1:10-17
 - The people of Israel were to imitate God, himself. (Ps 68:5)

C. 2:1-13 Discrimination against the Poor Violates Kingdom Law

1. 2:1-7 Discrimination in the Community Is Wrong

"My Brothers"

- fellow members of God's People (also signifies a topic switch cf. 1:2, 16, 19)

"Show no partiality" (NIV = show no favoritism)

- **favoritism** shown on the basis of one's status in society.
 - dress, skin color, general physical appearance, gender, physical disorder, wealth, political status
- The OT stresses that God is impartial and looks at the heart (Deut. 10:17; Levi 19:15-18)

"The Lord of Glory"

- Is a common title in the OT. NT used of Jesus 1 Cor 2:8
- "Glory" can signify God's presence
 - Cf. 1 Sam 4:22; 2 Pet 1:17; Heb 1:3; Rom 9:4
 - Glory is the state of "being-like-God" to which Christians are destined:
 - Cf. Rom 5:2, 8:18; 2 Cor 4:17
 - This is the state Jesus currently exists:
 - Cf. Phil 3:21; Col 3:4; 2 Thes 2:14; 1 Tim 3:16; Tit 2:13; Heb 2:7, 9

v 2, the illustration

- Contrasting guests
 - 1. wearing a gold ring/fine clothes = upper-level Roman class
 - 2. "shabby" = dirty/filthy/soiled
 - same word used in 1:21 to characterize sinful filth that Christians must put off
- "show/pay attention" = look at with favor, but the poor man is treated with disdain/contempt
- Favoritism towards the rich is wrong because it contradicts God's attitude
 - 1 Cor 1:27, 28
 - Beatitude Lk 6:20; Mt 5:3
 - James calls on the church to embody a similar ethic of special concern for the poor and helpless
- "has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom"
 - Chose/Kaleo = same word used for the election of Israel (NT priests)
 - Hosea 2:23; Rom. 4:17; Rom. 8:30; 1Pet. 2:9
- v 6 "you have dishonored the poor" (NIV = insulted)
 - Shame/Honor society

Therefore: favoritism towards the rich at the expense of the poor is wrong because it contradicts God's regard for the poor, and it makes no sense

- It violates the law of love (vv 8-13)

2. 2:8-13 Discrimination Is Wrong Because It Violates the Kingdom Law of Love

"Keeping the royal law"

- Think in terms of the *Kingdom of God* and how Jesus fulfills the Mosaic Law: *Love God and your neighbor* (Mt 22-37-40)
 - Shema (Deut 6:4-9)
 - Lev 19 do justice to the poor, judge your neighbor fairly, etc
 - You can't say you love God if you don't love God's People
 - In the OT "*neighbor*" means a fellow Israelite, Jesus includes everyone!
 - The heart of the *royal law* forbids the church from discriminating against anyone who enters its doors. (Good Samaritan Lk 10:36)

Christians who show favoritism are *convicted by the law as lawbreakers!*

v 12 "*the law of liberty*" (NIV = *law that gives freedom*) = Love the Lord your God, Love your neighbor

- Judgment under the law of liberty is based on obedience = Mt 25:31-46; 1 Jn 3:24

The Law of Liberty: "an obligation we discharge in the joyful knowledge that God has both 'liberated' us from the penalty of sin and given us, in his Spirit, the power to obey his will." -Moo

v 13 "*For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*"

- BECAUSE you've been shown mercy, you have the ability to give mercy to others

D. 2:14-26 Saving Faith Reveals Itself in Works

James uses *diatribe*

- Theme of the paragraph is faith
 - faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead (v 17)
 - faith without deeds is useless (v 20)
 - faith without deeds is dead (v 26)

"...but does not have works?" (NIV = *but has no deeds?*)

- works/*ergon* = work/action/accomplishment
 - **Paul** (*works of the law*) = the Jewish emphasis (works done in obedience to Torah as a response to God's election)
 - Gal 3:2, 5, 10; Rom 3:20, 28
 - **James** (*works*) = general to refer to actions done in obedience to God (and vindicating one's faith by their works)
 - NIV translation (Ja 2:14 *deeds*) probably to avoid confusion with Eph 2:9

"Can that faith save him?"

- If you have workless-faith, then you actually have no faith

vv 15-17 illustration

- "*poorly clothed and lacking in daily food*" (NIV = *without clothes*) the idea of being naked
- "*'go in peace, be warmed and filled', without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?*"
- "*I wish you well*" = a religious cover for the failure to act
 - Cf. Mt 25 (Sheep and Goats)

"So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (NIV = "in the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead")

- Two points (vv 16-17)
 - 1. The words of an uncaring believer who fails to act to help a person in need are as useless as...
 - 2. The profession of faith of a believer who does not have deeds.

"So James doesn't contrast faith and works (like they're two alternative options in one's approach to God). He is contrasting a faith that (because it is inherently defective) produces no works, and a faith that (because it is genuine) does result in action." - Moo

v 18 (another diatribe). James' point: you can't act this way and be a follower of Jesus!"

v 19 provides the response: *"you believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder!"*

- God is one: monotheism = Shema: Deut 6:4
- It doesn't matter if you have proper theology (monotheism) if you don't love your neighbor

v. 20 *Foolish = empty, being void of intellectual/moral/spiritual value* (1Cor. 15:14)

- to *"be shown"* (*ginosko*) (NIV = *do you want evidence*) to grasp the significance - comprehend something

v. 21 *"Was not our father Abraham justified by works..."*

- Abraham 12:1-3, 7 (descendants of Abraham become the People of God)
 - Ps 105:6; Gal 3:16, 28-29; Jer 33:26, Heb 2:16
- Offering up Isaac (Gen 22), and his willingness to obey God
 - *"considered righteous"* quote from Gen 15:6
 - parallels from Abraham to James
 - Abraham had "deeds" he was "tested" and was found "righteous"
 - James is introducing faith as the ultimate cause of the works through which Abraham was justified

Tension between James and Paul (Rom 3:28)

Justify

We usually understand "justify" through the writings of Paul

- *justify/dikaioo* = to denote God's initial judicial verdict of "innocence" pronounced over the sinner who trusts Jesus"
 - The OT view = one is declared to be in the right on the facts (because they are innocent).
 - The NT uses:
 - 1. Paul uses "*justify*" to refer to how a person gets into relationship with God
 - 2. James uses it to describe what that relationship must look like to receive God's final approval.

James' use of *dikaioo*: demonstrate to be right/vindicate (justifying yourself/proving yourself correct, by your works)

v 23 James is giving a *forensic* (legal) meaning of righteousness here

- i.e., the rightness that Abraham attained with God.
 - It's not the timing of the declaration, but the character of his faith
- Paul is using this term (Rm 4:1-17) in a chronological (timing) way (Abraham was declared righteous solely on the basis of his faith, before he was circumcised).
 - James is using it as a "motto" applied to Abraham's entire life.

v 24 "*You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.*"

Justified has the same meaning as v 21 = God's final declaration of a person's innocence at the time of judgment.

- **Jas 2:24: A person is justified by works and not by faith alone**
- **Rom 3:28: A person is justified by faith and not by works of the law**
 - James is speaking of mere "*works*"
 - i.e., anything done in service to God
 - Paul is speaking of "*works of the Law*" (Torah)
 - i.e., Paul refers specifically to *Torah* (Jewish context); actions done in obedience to God were defined by the Mosaic law. (Rom 3:28)

- **Therefore: Both Paul and James believe you are saved by faith in Christ (they're just using the terms in different ways)**
 - Rom 2:5-8 (God renders to man according to his deeds)
 - Matt 7:16-20 (Know them by their fruit)
 - James is referring to a *bogus faith*
- Paul: the initial declaration of a sinner's innocence before God
- James: the ultimate verdict of innocence pronounced of a person at the last judgment

"That is the real proof that you believe your sins have been atoned for, and that you have truly been humbled by that knowledge and are now living a life submitted to God and shaped by knowledge of Him." - Tim Keller (Justice)

v 25 *Rahab*: Justified = vindicate in the judgment (same meaning as earlier)

- Joshua 2:1-22
- Abraham and Rahab
 - both "converts" to the God of Israel (foreigners); neither had "dead faith"
 - Abraham = "Israelite" and Rahab = "Gentile woman"
 - anyone is capable of acting in faith!

v 26 *"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead"*

- *spirit* = the life principle that animates the body (not a dualistic view like the Gnostics).

"The faith that brings salvation brings works!" -Dalrymple

IV. 3:1-4:3 The Community Dimension of Spiritual Wholeness: Pure Speech and Peace, Part 1

The theme of 1:19-2:26 = the need to practice true religion by doing the works that the word of God requires

- The main idea = quarrels that are shaking the community
- A concern about people wanting to teach leads James into a general warning about the tongue (uncontrolled speech)
 - 1. vv. 1-2 warns people about the difficulty of controlling the tongue
 - 2. vv. 3-6 the incredible power of the tongue
 - 3. vv. 7-8 as powerful as it is, the difficulty in controlling the tongue
 - 4. vv. 9-12 the tongue reveals its evil nature by manifesting "doubleness"

A. 3:1-12 Control of the Tongue Manifests the Transformed Heart

v 1 "becoming teachers"

- Teacher = equivalent to the *rabbi*
 - Paul ranks *teacher* highly on the list of Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor 12:28)

- Problem:
 - 1. too many were seeking the status of teacher without necessary moral/intellectual qualities
 - 2. unfit teachers may have been the cause of many of the issues (for James' church):
 - partisan spirit (3:13-18)
 - quarreling (4:1)
 - unkind/critical speech (4:11)

"we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (more emphatically = a greater judgment/condemnation)

- Lk 12:48 "for everyone who has been given much, much more will be asked"

v2 "for"

- the explanation for the previous statement (explanatory conjunction)

- When the tongue is out of control it can destroy much good that has already been done

vv 3-4

- Small instruments with great effect: bits into the horses' mouth, ships' rudder, small fire/forest fire

v 6 *"And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell."*

- Influenced by Jewish tradition in the "sins of the tongue" from the Proverbs
 - *thoughtless "chattering"* 10:8; 12:18; 29:20
 - *gossiping* 10:18
 - *lying* 12:19
 - *arrogant boasting* 18:12

v7 *"every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind"*

- Recalls garden imagery/creation account (Gen 1:26)

v8 *"but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."*

v9 *"With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God."*

"if 'blessing God' is one of the highest forms of speech, then 'cursing' those who are made in his image is one of the lowest." - Moo

Blessings and Curses (the background of Deuteronomy ch 27-33)

- Jesus = "bless those who curse you" Lk 6:28; Rom 12:14

v11 *"does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water?"*

- A pure heart and impure/double-tongued speech are incompatible
- Mk 7/Mt 15 illustration: bad things don't produce good things.

B. 3:13-4:3 True Wisdom Brings Peace

v13 *"Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom."*

- James is condemning the leaders for their bad conduct:
 - 1. These teachers are supposed to be making peace, but they're not.
 - 2. Good conduct: caring for the poor (widows/orphans/partiality/etc. Cf. chap 2)
 - 3. James is challenging people who *think* they have special understanding and insight into spiritual matters, so he can analyze their legitimacy.

- Good Wisdom:
 - Humility (1:21)
 - Good works (2:14-26)
 - *True wisdom* produces: good works/humility
 - *False wisdom* produces: envy/selfishness
 - humility/meekness were not virtues in the Greek world (shame/honor)
 - Jesus was meek (Mt 11:29)
 - God blesses the meek (Mt 5:5)
 - Meekness comes from understanding our position as sinful creatures in relation to God's majesty as creator
 - OT Wisdom: Prov 1:7; 2:9; 2:20

v 14-15 *"But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic."*

- *jealousy/envy* = (zelot) Two basic meanings:
 - 1. Intense positive interest in something
 - 2. Intense negative feelings over another's achievements or success, *jealousy, envy* (Acts 5:17)
- *selfish ambition* = ἐπιθειά
 - (Phil 2:3)
- *boast* = take pride in/put confidence in (OT concept: Jer 9:23-24)

v 15 *"This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic."*

- true wisdom is the gift of God (Prov 2:6)
- *from above/earthly*
 - Imagery used to describe the Kingdom of God vs the kingdom of the world
 - from above = Kingdom of God (which will ultimately overcome this world, Cf. Rev 21-22)
 - from below = Kingdom of the world (evil desires, decay, death, sin, things destined to perish)

v 17 *"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere."*

- James' description of wisdom seems similar to Paul's *Fruit of the Spirit* (Gal 5:22)
 - (humility, peaceableness, upright behavior)

- Wisdom produces:
 - 1. *Purity*
 - 2. *Peaceable* (peace loving) (Mat 5:9)
 - 3. *Gentle* (considerate)
 - 4. *Open to reason*
 - 5. *Full of mercy and good works*
 - 6. *Impartial*
 - 7. *Sincere*

v 18 *"And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."* (Mt 5:9)

4:1 *"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?"*

- The theme of wisdom; the fruit of wisdom brings order and peace to the church
 - *quarrels* = battles/strife of any kind (armed conflicts/wars)
 - (Cf. 2 Cor 7:5; 2 Tim 2:23)
 - Connection to the tongue: (the misuse of the tongue: 3:1-12; 4:11-12; 5:9)

 - How to engage conflict? (Cf. 1:2-21)
 - The cause of the fights? *"your passions are at war within you"*
 - passions = state or condition of experiencing pleasure for any reason, pleasure, delight, enjoyment, pleasantness

v. 3 *"You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."*

- Mt 7:7

V. 4:4-10 A Summons to Spiritual Wholeness

v 4 *"you adulterous people"*

- The People of God are married to God (OT prophetic language)
 - Jer 3:9 (Cf. Hosea)
- The People of God are in a covenant relationship with Yahweh (OT/NT), often defined as a marriage (Is 54:5-6) (Hosea 2:5-7)

"whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

- The already/not yet *"Two-Age Model"* (Cf. "Wisdom from above 3:15")
 - **The age to come** has been inaugurated in the life/resurrection of Christ
 - **The age to come** will be consummated at the return of Christ/Judgment Day (Day of the LORD)
 - Mt 12:32; Mk 10:30 (Lk 18:30); John 18:36; Eph 1:21
- James' examples of imitating the world:
 - 1. discriminating against people (2:1-13)
 - 2. speaking negatively of others (3:1-12)
 - 3. exhibiting 'bitter envy' and 'selfish ambition' (3:13-18)
 - 4. pursuing one's own destructive pleasures (4:1-3)

v 5 *"Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?"*

- two main interpretations:
 - 1. James is referring to God's jealousy for his people:
 - 2. James is referring to the human tendency to be envious:

v 6 *"But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'"*

- More grace: God's grace is completely adequate to meet the requirements imposed on us by that jealousy (cf. 4:5)
 - Quoting from Prov 3:34

"God's gift of sustaining grace is enjoyed only by those willing to admit their need and accept the gift" - Moo

- The proud: Ps 18:27; Is 61:1

v 7-9 ***Submit*** yourselves therefore to God. ***Resist*** the devil, and he will flee from you. ***Draw*** near to God, and he will draw near to you. ***Cleanse*** your hands, you sinners, and ***purify*** your hearts, you double-minded. Be ***wretched*** and ***mourn*** and ***weep***. Let your laughter be ***turned*** to mourning and your joy to gloom."

- 10 Imperatives (commands)
 - Submit to God (v7; Cf. 1 Pet 5:5-9)
 - Resist (v7; Cf. Acts 6:10; 13:8; 2 Tim 3:8; 4:15)
 - Draw (v8; Cf. Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7; 2 Chron 15:1-4; Heb 4:16)
 - Cleanse (v8; Cf. Isa 1:16; Jer 4:14; Ps 24:3-4; 73:13)
 - Purify (v8; Cf. Ja 1:8)
 - Be wretched/miserable/lament (v9; Cf. 5:1; Rev 3:17)
 - Mourn (v9; Cf. Gen 37:34; Joel 2:12-13; Num 14:39; 1 Chron 7:22)
 - Weep (v9)
 - Let your laughter *be turned* to mourning and your joy to gloom (v9; Cf. Lk 6:25; Amos 8:10)
 - Humble (v10; Cf. Mt 23:12; Lk 14:11; 18:14; 2 Cor 11:7; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Pt 5:6)

- *Submit* = subject oneself, obey (same idea as 1 Cor 15:28; Eph 5:23)
 - submit = to place oneself under the lordship of God/Jesus
 - unbelief = a failure to submit to God's Law (Rm 8:7) and his Righteousness (Rm 10:3)

- *"Be wretched and mourn and weep."* (NIV = *Grieve, mourn and wail.*)
 - OT language (prophets) to denote reactions of those who suffer God's judgment
 - Is 15:2; Jer 4:13; Hos 10:5
 - *It's calling God's people to repentance*

v 10 **"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."**

- James' recapping Prov 3:34
 - Is 57:15; Lk 1:52; Mt 23:12

- 1. To recognize our own spiritual poverty (to align with the needy)
- 2. To acknowledge our desperate need of God's help
- 3. To submit to his commanding will for our lives.

VI. 4:11-12 The Community Dimension of Spiritual Wholeness: Pure Speech and Peace, Part 2

A. 4:11-12 Critical Speech is a Presumptuous Violation of the Law

v 11 *"Do not speak evil (or judge) against one another, brothers...(other Christians)"* (NIV = *Brothers, do not slander one another.*)

- How you treat the People of God is how you treat Jesus
 - Needs to be done humbly/lovingly
 - Mt 7:1-5

- Argument about the sinfulness of critical speech
 - *jealousy* (2 Cor 12:20)
 - *selfishness* (2 Cor 12:20)
 - *quarrels* (Pss. Sol. 12:3)

- *speaking against* can refer to:
 - *questioning legitimate authority* (Num 21:5)
 - *slandering in secret* (Ps 101:5)
 - *bringing incorrect accusations* (1 Pet 2:12; 3:16)

- NT emphasis on unity
 - Cf. Acts 4:32; Rom 12:18; 15:6; 1 Cor 1:10; Eph 4:1-6; Phil 1:27; 2:2; 1 Pt 3:8; Col 3:14; 2 Cor 13:11

- The *law* (probably OT law) is probably an illusion to Lev 19:16 (which sets up the *love command/royal law* in 19:18; Ja 2:8)
 - Lev 19:18 (The *Law* = the Torah interpreted/understood through the lens of Jesus)

- What is judging?
 - Judging is condemning someone, which is something only God can do.
 - To "not take the role of God"
 - "humble-judgment" (loving judgment) look like?
 - "GRACE, LOVE, COMPASSION"

v 12 slandering is wrong because it infringes on the unique right of God himself: *THERE IS ONLY ONE LAWGIVER AND JUDGE, the one who is able to save and destroy!* - Moo

VII. 4:13-5:11 The Worldview of Spiritual Wholeness: Understanding Time and Eternity

A. 4:13-17 Arrogant Planning Ignores God's Providence

v 13-14 "*today/tomorrow we will do _____...you don't know what tomorrow will bring.*"

- James is rebuking human arrogance = we think we can determine the course of future events: OT wisdom (Prov 27:1)

v 15 "Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

- Place a dependence on the Lord (Cf. Mt 6:10)

v 16-17

- the "Sins of omission" (knowing the right thing to do but not doing it)
 - The servant who failed to use his money (Lk 19:11-27)
 - People who fail to care for the outcasts of society (Mt 25:31-46)

B. 5:1-6 Misusing Wealth and Power Brings God's Judgment

v1-3 similar to 4:13-17; condemning a pursuit of wealth that fails to take into account the reality of God and his will for humanity.

- James uses "prophet" language to "pronounce doom" on the "pagan nations"
 - Judgment against the wicked (when the day of the Lord arrives)
 - Is 13:6; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16 (plus multiple other OT references)
- God's concern for the poor is reflected in the Mosaic Laws
 - (Prov 10:15-16; 14:20)
 - Jesus issues serious warnings about the threat of riches to genuine discipleship
 - (Lk 6:24-25; Rev 18:10-24)

v 4-6 The rich had cheated their workers of their pay

- Very OT/Jewish way of looking at justice
 - the Love command Lev 19:13
 - Mal 3:5; Deut 24:14-15
- The rich are accused of hoarding their wealth (vv 2-3), cheating workers (v 4), and living self-indulgently (v 5)

C. 5:7-11 Patiently Enduring Trials Earns God's Reward

v.7 "Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord."

- *Be patient, brothers* (to endure during times of opposition); long-suffering
 - Gal 5:22 (Fruit of Spirit)
 - James' theme of patience: 5:7; 8; 10; 11; 1:2-3; 1:12 (5:13)

v 7 (v 3) mentioned the "*last days*," and here James continues with "*coming*" language

- "*Last Days*"
 - The time of judgment to come
 - James explains this in v7, 8, with the nearness of the *Parousia*. (the *coming* of the Lord)
 - *coming* means "*presence*" = the arrival of a king/dignitary
 - Language used for Jesus for his "coming" to judge the world
 - 2 Pt 1:16; Mt 24:3; 1 Thes 4:13-18

Practice patience (like Job v11)

- OT story, God allowing a righteous man to suffer
- We are to *stand firm* so that we will be blameless and holy in the presence of God when the Lord Jesus comes with his holy ones
- How long are these *last days*?
 - Jesus didn't know (Mk 13:32)
 - But with the *death and resurrection* of Jesus and the pouring out of the Spirit, the *last days* have been inaugurated (Cf. note on 4:4)
 - Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17-21

v 9 "Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door."

- *grumbling* = continuing the theme of "sinful speech" (cf. 1:27; 3:1-12; 4:11-12)

v 10-11 *The example of the prophets*

- The prophets' willingness to undergo persecution for the sake of the call of God
 - Jeremiah = suffered at the hands of pagan kings and his own people
 - Isaiah = died a martyr by being sawed in two (Jewish tradition)

v 11 echoes the SOM with the blessing of the steadfast

- Mt. 5:11-12
 - Happy = speaks to emotions (temporary)
 - Blessed = the objective state of our relationship with God

v 11 *"the purpose of the Lord"*

- *purpose* = telos a point of time marking the end of a duration, *end, termination, cessation*
 - James' point: "your present suffering is not the 'end' of the story; God will transform your situation for good when Christ is revealed in glory!" -Moo
 - *Purpose of the Lord: Rm 8:28*

VIII. 5:12-20 Concluding Exhortations

A. 5:12 Avoid Oaths

"do not swear"

- The reliability of one's word (don't weasel out of your oath)
 - Parallels with SOM (Mt 5:33-37)

James isn't creating a legalism of "not being able to do take an oath, he's saying, "have integrity!"

B. 5:13-18 Prayer and Healing

NT exhortation for prayer: Rom 15:30-32; Eph 6:18-20; Heb 3:1-2

- *Suffering* (NIV = in *trouble*) economic, illness, death, etc

"Call the elders" = Spiritual leaders of the church

- Mk 2:1-12

- "anoint with oil"
 - 1. Medicinal (oil used in the ancient world as medicine)
 - 2. Pastoral (outward/physical expression of concern)
 - Consecrating of priests (Ex 40:15)

- v 14 "in the name of the Lord"
 - Take into account the will of God and Jesus

v 16 "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

- *confess* = to make an admission of wrong-doing/sin, *confess, admit,*

- *righteous person* = any believer

C. 5:19-20 A Concluding Summons to Action

v 19 "My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back"

- *The Truth*
 - Everything involved in the gospel, and not one aspect of Christian doctrine
 - Correct doctrine cannot be separated from correct behavior

- "*wanders*" = someone involved in "casual sins"

v 20 "let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

- James' point: "there is indeed an eternal death to which the way of sin leads, that we shall be motivated to deal with sin in our lives and in the lives of others." - Moo

Theological Terms

Antinomian: A term used to characterize believers in the early church who wrongly thought that salvation by faith in Jesus Christ freed them from all moral obligations and that they could sin with impunity (Gk *anti*, “against,” + *nomos*, “law”). The problem of antinomianism is addressed in such NT passages as Romans 6:1–11 and 1 John (cf. 1 Jn 1:9–10). Some scholars link this attitude to early forms of Gnosticism, where knowledge was placed above ethics.

Diaspora: Jews living outside the land of Israel in places such as Egypt, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, usually through enforcement by a conquering nation, such as in the Babylonian exile. The history of the Jews in Diaspora is longer than the history of the Jews living in a Jewish state in Palestine. The Egyptian enslavement of the Israelites is the paradigm for Jewish exile and the hope that God will gather his people again (Deut 30:3–5).

Eschatology: Derived from the Greek term meaning “last,” *eschaton* refers to the ultimate climax or end of history wherein Christ returns to earth to establish his eternal kingdom of righteousness and justice among all nations. Eschatology, then, is the theological study that seeks to understand the ultimate direction or purpose of history as it moves toward the future, both from an individual perspective (What happens when a person dies?) and from a corporate perspective (Where is history going, and how will it end?). In the twentieth century at least three basic forms of eschatology have developed. *Consistent, or thoroughgoing, eschatology* is the view that the teaching of Jesus and the apostles is thoroughly concerned with proclaiming the imminent end of history. *Realized eschatology* views the first coming of Jesus Christ itself as the full presence of the kingdom of God. *Inaugurated eschatology* sees the first coming of Christ as the beginning of the kingdom in the present, while acknowledging that the consummation or fulfillment of the kingdom of God is yet to come.

Exegesis: Literally, “drawing meaning out of” respectively. Exegesis is the process of seeking to understand what a text means or communicates on its own. *Eisegesis* is generally a derogatory term used to designate the practice of imposing a preconceived meaning onto a text, even if that meaning could not have been originally intended at the time of its writing.

Hermeneutics: Theories of interpretation. The term *hermeneutics* was first used with respect to interpretive methods and discussions of biblical interpretation; now the term has a broader use as the theory and art of interpreting any text.

Jewish Christians. Jews who were disciples of Jesus or converted to Christianity by confessing Jesus as the Messiah and were baptized “into the name of Jesus” (Acts 2:38). Sometimes this group of early Jewish Christians is described as Palestinian Christians because the movement was largely confined to Palestine. It appears that Jewish Christians, under the leadership of James (Acts 15:1–35; 21:17–26), particularly those in and around Jerusalem, retained many of their Jewish traditions and beliefs—in other words, they continued to “live Jewishly” and saw no need to cease being Jews because they converted to Christianity. It is likely that some of these Jewish/Palestinian Christians (Judaizers) insisted that Paul require Gentile converts to obey Jewish laws in addition to putting their faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 2–3).

Justification: A forensic (legal) term related to the idea of acquittal, *justification* refers to the divine act whereby God makes humans, who are sinful and therefore worthy of condemnation, acceptable before a God who is holy and righteous. More appropriately described as “justification by grace through faith,” this key doctrine of the Reformation asserts that a sinner is justified (pardoned from the punishment and condemnation of sin) and brought into relationship with God by faith in God’s grace alone.

Law: The *law* means variously the OT in general, the Torah (especially the Pentateuch or first five books of the Bible), the Ten Commandments or the several codes of conduct that identified Israel as set apart and in covenantal relationship with God. Jesus summarized the law with two commandments: to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself. Paul declares that the law is fulfilled in Jesus, who sets humans free from the law's penalty of death. *Legalism* is the attitude that identifies morality with the strict observance of laws or that views adherence to moral codes as defining the boundaries of a community. Religious legalism focuses on obedience to laws or moral codes based on the (misguided) assumption that such obedience is a means of gaining divine favor.

Parousia: A Greek word used to refer to the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of history. Literally, the term means "presence." Hence it designates Christ's return as the point at which he will be fully present to the world or his presence will be fully revealed. The term was used of kings/dignitaries who would "come" into a kingdom.

Proverb: A brief, popular saying summarizing a piece of wisdom about common human experiences: "A penny saved is a penny earned." The biblical proverbs are intended as instructions on the "art of living well" and invite the reader to look at the world from the distinctive view of faith, the "fear of the Lord." Proverbs require both skill and discernment to plumb the art of living well (cf. Prov 1:2–7 and 1–9 generally). In the NT, note Matthew 6:21 ("For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also") and 26:52 ("For all who take the sword will perish by the sword").

Righteousness: An attribute of God's being; God's right and just character, actions and judgments. God's righteousness as understood in a covenantal context includes God's right judgment of both God's own people and those who oppress them, as well as God's salvation and mercy extended to those to whom the covenanting God has promised to be faithful. Righteousness and salvation are summed up in and provided for all those who believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By extension, righteousness denotes the type of life that

ought to characterize Jesus' disciples. Believers are to "imitate" God and thereby become righteous in life just as God is righteous. *God's Righteousness* also refers to the act by which God declares sinful people to be just in his sight.

Theology: A religious belief system about God or ultimate reality. *Theology* commonly refers to the ordered, systematic study or interpretation of the Christian faith and experience of God based on God's divine self-revelation. Theology also seeks to apply these truths to the full breadth of human experience and thought. Theology seeks to "harmonize" what the Bible (along with church history) has said about a particular topic (e.g., the Trinity; hell; baptism).

Theologizing: To speculate about theology; to render/insert a theological conclusion; to treat theologically, oftentimes at the expense of exegesis.

Torah: The first part of the Hebrew canon (Gen-Deut). It is traditionally translated "*law*" but is more literally the *instruction*. The term can also be used of the OT as a whole, including even the Talmud, so it comes to have the sense of God's revelation as a whole and not just commands or laws. Instructive are passages such as Psalm 1:2, where the righteous "delight" in Torah, and Psalms 19 and 119, which are extended poems on the worth of Torah. Torah sets forth the fundamentals of Israelite faith and functions as the norm for judging all subsequent experiences of God.

Wisdom Literature. Biblical literature/genre characterized by instruction based upon experience, tradition. Biblical wisdom books are traditionally identified as Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes (Song of Songs is also included in some lists), and Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon in the Apocrypha. We also find strong wisdom influence in the Psalms (e.g., Ps 1) and in many other books (e.g., the Joseph stories in Genesis and the stories of Daniel and his friends, to which some would add the story of Esther). Wisdom is open to all, since it seeks to instruct people to live a well-ordered life, a life lived acknowledging God's ways and intentions for his creation. Wisdom has its source in God, the "fear of the LORD" (Prov 1:7).