

James

INTRODUCTION

*“But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it,
and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work,
that one will be blessed in what he does.” (James 1:25)*

The book of James has been called *the Proverbs of the New Testament*, and is also referred to as a practical guide to Christian life and conduct. It is filled with moral precepts and clearly states the ethics of Christianity. Hebrews presents doctrine while James presents deeds, and these two are both necessary in giving us the perfect Gospel of Christ.

The author of James is stated in the opening verse, and he no doubt is the brother of our Lord. Although James knew his Brother well, he referred to himself as “bondservant” and to Jesus as his Lord.

James addressed his book to Christian Jews scattered abroad, somewhere around AD 60, near the close of his life after a 30-year pastorate of the Judean Church in Jerusalem. It is believed that James was stoned to death for his refusal to denounce or blaspheme the Lord Jesus Christ.

All of his teaching was to show his followers that what he had received from his Lord could be used in practical everyday religion pertaining to: trials, God’s Word, human relationships, speech, worldliness and business affairs. He stood for true obedience and consistency in life and conduct. The Apostle Paul dwelt on the source of our faith, while James taught on the fruit of our faith. Great godly wisdom is imparted in this book, serving as an unswerving guide for daily, upward living in Christ. We are saved by faith resulting in works that glorify God.

James 1:1-11

There are two ways to do things—faith and works; one to do them yourself, the other to let God do them. The power of faith is not how much can I do, but how much can God do? Faith saves us just because it puts us into God's hands. It drops us into the salvation that He has already finished, and we have only to accept. Faith sanctifies us, not because it would have us do better, but it brings the power to do it. So faith heals, not by slowly building up the tissues and blood, but by putting a new electric fountain of vitality in your frame that makes an old man young, and although ready to drop into the grave keeps you by a second life. Faith brings the answers to your prayers, because it takes God's prayers instead of yours, and then they must be answered, because they are His asking, claiming and commanding. Faith puts us out and brings God in, and our life becomes a supernatural one. Faith is, therefore, a practical force, the secret of all real power, and a secret which can be applied to everything in our life. Let us now examine the exposition of faith as we find it in the Epistle of James.

We are taught the principle of faith—what it is and how it comes.

It must be absolute and unwavering. You cannot have a half faith. It must be not doubting. The element of uncertainty destroys the vitality of faith just as much as a scratch defaces a mirror, and as a little chip in the side of your grain of corn kills the germ. The faith which accomplishes omnipotent results is confidence, boldness and the full assurance of faith.

Next we are told that faith is the receiving organ of the soul, that without it we cannot receive anything of the Lord. "God . . . gives generously to all without finding fault" (James 1:5), or "of course," as Alford translates it: God always gives. But the unbelieving heart cannot receive. It is fettered and paralyzed by its doubts, and like the sensitive plant shrinks helplessly, and misses the blessing that His love would gladly have bestowed. "That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord" (1:7).

"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God . . . But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt" (1:5-6). Wisdom is that quality which enables us to suit the right means to the end in view. It is wholly practical and concerned not with theories and ideas, but with actual conditions and the way to meet them. It teaches us how to live, and enables us to meet every emergency rightly and successfully. It does not mean that we are infallible. It is not the wisdom of our common sense and level-headedness. It presupposes our ignorance and fallibility, and takes God's wisdom instead of our own. Even when we cannot understand His leading, faith still can trust Him that it will be right in the end. Even when we err, God's wisdom can still overrule our mistake and bring blessing out of it in the end.

Spurgeon used to tell about a weather vane which had the text inscribed above it, "God is love." When he asked the old miller why he put the verse on top of it, he said that it might speak to the people at all points of the compass and say to them, "God is love, whichever way the wind blows." So faith in God's wisdom counts upon His goodness and faithfulness in the face of all conditions and in spite of all hindrances.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

If faith is lacking, and the heart is wavering in unbelief, is it useless to ask anything of God?

From a biblical perspective explain the difference between a single and double minded person?

Col. 3:3 Jas. 3:14-18 Jas. 4:4 1 John 2:16

James 1:12-16

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds. (James 1:2)

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. (James 1:12)

Rotherham slightly changes the translation of these verses, as does also the Revised Version. "My brethren, count it all joy when we fall in with divers temptations" (1:2). "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (or testings), for when he is *approved*, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (1:12).

This conservative old minister in the church of Jerusalem, James, deals with the practical discipline of life from two sides.

He first tells us that temptation is not an unmingled evil. By temptation he means undoubtedly evil; not trouble, but the solicitation of evil, the battle for right with the power of the tempter and our evil heart. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials [temptations, KJV] of many kinds" (1:2). "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial [temptation, KJV]" (1:12). While it is evil, it has a good side, and it becomes an agency in the education of our spiritual character and the strengthening of all the better elements of our nature.

While temptation is not directly from God, yet it is overruled by God, and made one of His instrumentalities of blessing to us. "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone" (1:13), yet God permits us to be tempted. God put our first parents into temptation and He made it possible for them either to choose or refuse; He gave them a nature subject to

temptation, and while it might overcome them, it might also be overcome. God does not tempt any man, yet He does allow this to be one of the classes in the school of faith and holiness. He even led Jesus Christ, His own Son, into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted of the devil. Think it not a strange thing then, dear friends, if your life is called to pass through the ordeal of the conflict—evil from within and from without, not merely things that grieve, afflict and distress you, but things that tend to make you do wrong and draw you from the path of righteousness, truth and godliness. They will come. God wants you to be forewarned and forearmed, and to know it is better that they should come to you, if you but take the panoply of God and come through in victory.

We should never forget where the source of temptation comes from. "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed" (1:14). Temptation comes from your own heart. There are innumerable tempters: men, women and fallen spirits of wickedness. But none have any power unless we have ourselves a traitor in the citadel of the heart. The enemy cannot get in unless you let him in. You hold the key of the fortress. Therefore it is in your own heart that the crucial battle is fought, the secret foe is hidden—your own lust, your own desire or "coveting," which is the literal translation, the thing in you that wants to do the wrong, your wish for it, even if it is not yet your will. This is the starting place of temptation. It is that blossom of sin. And this is where God wants to bring His sanctifying grace and take away the very desire.

Just as the sea fowl plunging in the miry water comes up undefiled because its wing is oiled and burnished and the filth around cannot adhere to it, so the Lord Jesus passed through the powers of darkness and the allurements of the world and all the evil that was around Him and was proof against it. He could say "the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me" (John 14:30). It is in the heart that temptation has its starting point. Ask God to give you a true and holy desire to please Him, and an instinctive repugnance and recoil from evil; and so long as you have this, you shall not fall into temptation.

Then we have the blessedness of resisting and enduring temptation. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials [temptations, KJV] of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4). "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial [temptation, KJV]" (1:12). The battle does you good. The conflict educates you, strengthens you, establishes you, and is necessary for you that you may be grounded and settled and finally approved and rewarded. One of the best results of temptation is that it shows you what is in your own heart. It reveals yourself. Until temptation comes, you feel strong and self-confident; but when the keen edge of the adversary's weapon has pierced your soul, you have more sympathy with others and less confidence in your own self-sufficiency. You are humiliated and broken at His feet, a poor, helpless thing; and this is the best thing that can happen to you. God wants to disarm you and lay you low, and then He can lift and save you and give you His strength. It makes you humble and doubtful of yourself. You find you must not take the aggressive, but fly to your refuge in Christ. "He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Like the little conies that hide in the rock and do not face their enemies, but fly for shelter, you will find your only safeguard is Jesus Christ. He is the shield to cover you, and you will be safe not by fighting, but by hiding behind the cross and in the bosom of your Savior. If you have had much spiritual conflict, it has humbled you, shown you your helplessness, and taught you sympathy for others.

Temptation exercises our faith and teaches us to pray. It is like military drill and a taste of battle to the young soldier. It puts us under fire and compels us to exercise our weapons and prove their potency. It shows us the resources of Christ and the preciousness of the promises of God. It teaches us the reality of the Holy Spirit, and compels us to walk closely with Him and hide continually behind His strength and all-sufficiency. Every victory gives us new confidence in our victorious leader, and new courage for the next onset of the foe, so that we become not only victors, but more than conquerors, taking the strength of our conquered foes and gathering precious spoil from each new battlefield. Temptation strengthens what we have received and establishes us in all our spiritual qualities and graces.

You will find the forest trees which stand apart, exposed to the double violence of the storm, are always the sturdiest and strike their roots the deepest in the soil. And so it is true in the spiritual world, as the Apostle Peter expressed it: "The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" (1 Peter 5:10).

Temptation also teaches us patience. "Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:4). This implies that patience is the finishing grace of the Christian life. Therefore, God usually puts His children through the school of suffering last. It is the graduation class in the discipline of Christ. Let us not, therefore, be surprised if God puts us through the hottest of all furnaces, namely, that which is fired with the devil's brimstone, before He makes us vessels for his glory.

Temptation brings a glorious recompense of reward, for "because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him" (1:12). There is a reward for the soul-winner. There is a reward for the Christian pastor and worker. But there is also a special reward for the man or the woman who has had no great service, and perhaps has won no single soul, but who has stood in the hard place, has kept sweet in the midst of wrong, and in the face of temptation, pure amid the allurements of the world, and simply withstood in the evil day, and having done all, stood at last approved.

On the field of Waterloo, there was a regiment which stood under fire through all that awful day and was not once

suffered to charge upon the enemy. It held the key to the position, and as again and again permission to advance was asked, the answer came, "Stand firm." When they had nearly all fallen, the message came back for the last time from their commander, "You have saved the day," and the answer was returned, "You will find us all here." Sure enough they lay a heap of slain on that fatal, yet glorious hill. They had simply stood, and history has given them the reward of valor and the imperishable fame of having turned the tide of the greatest battle of the 19th century. So God is preparing crowns for quiet lives, for suffering women, for martyred children, for the victims of oppression and wrong, for the silent sufferers and the lonely victors who just endured temptation. Tempted brother, be of good cheer. Some day you will wonder at the brightness of your crown.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

As we look back to the original language we find that the aim of testing is to purge us from all impurity. **Below are listed three statements of truth pertaining to this teaching. After each one, from your own experience and from your studies, please write a statement or two as to the meaning of each of these:**

- 1. It makes the Christian perfect (perfection towards a given end).**
- 2. It makes him complete (entire, perfect in every part).**
- 3. It makes him deficient in nothing (used in the defeat of an army or the giving up of a struggle).**

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (James 1:14-15) Temptation comes from the corrupt flesh or sin nature within us. Satan knows this and encourages us toward a life of sin. We may desire to sin from what the eye sees and if the person rejects this, it is not sin, for our eyes see many sinful things in this world. However, if he goes further and actually indulges in that lust—or “marries” himself to it—then the consummation brings forth its own “fruit” or death. **Look up 1 John 2:15-17 and compare this to James 1:14-15. Do these teachings apply today to our testings (temptations)?**

James 1:17-27

James talks about the self-revealing power of the Word of God. It is here compared to a mirror, and the ordinary hearer of the Word to a man beholding his natural face in the glass. But the hasty glance passes, and he "immediately forgets what he looks like" (James 1:24). The true hearer is represented by the man who takes a nearer view of himself in the sacred mirror, and becomes not a forgetful hearer of the Word, but a doer. Literally translated, this should read, "But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does" (1:25). The beginning of all self-improvement is self-knowledge, and the most wholesome knowledge we can have of ourselves is to know our faults. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). Blessed are they that are dissatisfied, for they shall be satisfied, so this has been happily translated. It is thus that the Word of God sanctifies us by showing us first our need, and then leading us to Christ for the supply. We look into the picture of love first in the 13th chapter of First Corinthians, and we see how little we have of the love that "is patient [and] is kind" (13:4). Humbled by a sense of our failure, we take Christ for the grace of love. We bring our strifes and quarrels to the teaching of Jesus in the 18th and 19th chapters of Matthew, and we begin to settle our disputes according to the Word.

Thus we "discern ourselves," and by true self-judgment we escape the divine judgment and rise to a higher righteousness, taking Christ as our sanctification over against our self-condemnation. The willingness to see ourselves in our true light is the very highest proof of a true heart. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). And the best evidence that there is no hidden sin covered up in our heart is our readiness to say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

"He will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25). Having seen our fault and also the vision of God's highest will for us, now follows the responsibility of practical obedience. James is a thorough believer in good works. He is no musty ascetic living in pensive cloisters and dreaming his life away in self-centered introspection, but a man of wholesome action carrying his religion into the light of day and the field of human life and helpful duty. It is in the doing that the blessing comes.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Verse 21 tells us to "lay aside" two things—all filthiness and overflow of wickedness—and as we do that, the promise is to receive with meekness (humility, thankfulness) the implanted or grafted Word—the spiritual process accomplished in us

by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Find other verses that teach us this same holy operation in our inner being, and especially cite some that have become precious to you. When this happened to you, did you find that you obtained quiet inner peace and rest? Can this be found anywhere else?**

James 2:1-13

"Because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!" (James 2:13). Again, "Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it" (4:11). The spirit of criticism, fault finding, and censoriousness are all condemned by this law of love. Ask God for the love that "always trusts, always hopes" (1 Corinthians 13:7), and *dares to think the best both of others and of yourself*, God wants you to look on the brightest side in your own heart and life and then in others. You will find the one who is harsh and censorious gets the worst of it. Like the scorpion which after stinging others ends by stinging itself to death, that one gets the retribution of a bitter spirit in the misery it brings.

God puts us in the place of trial to give us the opportunity of rising to the spirit of Christian love, just as He placed Christ in the judgment hall in order that He might stand before us as an example of long-suffering love. He lets people hurt and wrong us that we may be more like Him. When God in His providence calls you to these trying conditions, it is that you may have your education completed and enter into the sweetness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and be merciful even as you expect him to be merciful to you.

The unpardonable sin of the New Testament is that of unforgiveness, "Because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful" (James 2:13).

A Christian worker said that he once became satisfied that the worm at the core of much of the work in his field was this petty spirit of faultfinding, this readiness to see wrong. He set his face against it and got his people to set their faces against it by prayer and watching. The result was wonderful in the blessing that had come to the work. The work had grown and prospered since they had put these weeds out of the garden and destroyed the worm at the roots. This curse grows unconsciously. Shall we resolve by God's grace that if we cannot speak well, we will not speak ill of one another?

"Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom" (2:12). How do you expect to be judged? Do you suppose God is going to reveal all your sins before the throne, and you stand in shame of that revelation? "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness ... At that time each will receive his praise from God" (1 Corinthians 4:5). In that day of final assize, your Judge is going to bring out every hidden motive that could shed a generous light upon your conduct and character. He is going to bring out the praise, and not the blame. We have not been living up to our expectations. Let us ask God not to deal with us as we have dealt with one another. Lord, help us so to act "as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom" (James 2:12).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

What is the law of liberty that James mentions in v. 12?

James 2:14-26

Faith puts to the proof the statements of God by acting upon them, and in the acting finds their substance and reality. Faith tests the unseen things, and translates them into real experience.

This was strikingly true in the case of Moses. By faith he looked beyond the things before his eyes, he deliberately chose to refuse all the "pleasures" and "treasures" of the present, and faith tested, proved, or gave substance to his hopes. He was led step by step away from things seen, into a fellowship and communion with the unseen God, of which he had no conception when he made his choice in Egypt.

"Faith" is the key to all the treasures of God. The Gospel is practically God's statement of what *is* in the spiritual world. Faith is simply believing God's Word, however contrary it may appear to the things of sense and sight. Faith in God's statement to us is proved by action. We act according to what is told us by God, which we believe, and must of necessity obey. Living faith involves action; without action it may be said to be dead, for a mental assent to the truths of God will never give them substance in our lives. If we do believe God's Word, we shall act according to that Word.

(Face to Face, Jessie Penn Lewis)

The two examples of Abraham and Rahab show that faith and deeds are not opposites—they are, in fact, inseparables. No man will ever be moved to action without faith; and no man's faith is genuine unless it moves him to action. **Tell us in your own words what you believe are the essential elements of true faith. For instance, how does one go from a position of doubt and questioning to a position of such strong faith that he is willing to stake his life upon it?**

James 3:1-18

Speech is one of the supreme distinctions between man and the lower animals. The power of expressing thought in articulate language and written speech, and giving it an incarnate body and a tangible immortal life, is one of the high prerogatives of rational beings. Science through the phonograph is putting upon the tablets which will endure through time the very tones of our voice. God is emphasizing the power and importance of the tongue, and it may be that we will find some day that every whisper that ever emanated from our life has been recorded on phonographic plates in yonder sky. We may find that the witnesses of the judgment will be the records that we ourselves have made, and we will realize that by our words we will be justified and by our words we will be condemned, and "I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken" (Matthew 12:36).

The Apostle James considers it worthwhile to devote a whole chapter to the subject of the tongue and the practical use of our little member of speech.

James tells us that the control of the tongue is the test of character. A man's conversation is the real test of his character, and a man that "does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless" (James 1:26). An unbridled tongue is a sure sign of an unsanctified, undisciplined and perhaps unsaved soul. On the other hand, "If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check" (3:2). It is a sign that he is under the government of his conscience, his will and the Holy Spirit. This is a most heart-searching test. Let us take it home. Can we stand it? It was a foolish word, a hasty word, a word of doubt and irritation that lost Moses the Land of Promise. He would have taken it back if he could, but it was recorded. It had gone upon the record, and it had to stand, and for that one little speech Moses lost the hope of a lifetime. While he was taken to heaven, he could not lead Israel into the land which was the type of a victorious life.

When Isaiah was called to his ministry, it was his lips that were first sanctified. The live coal was applied to these members, and the word spoken, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for" (Isaiah 6:7). His tongue had to be purified before God could use him.

On the day of Pentecost, it was cloven tongues, tongues of fire that came, tongues possessed by the Holy Spirit. If you have received the baptism of the Spirit, your tongue has received the first touch. You will never talk as you used to talk, you will never have the same unlicensed freedom, but your language will be under the control of a watchful spirit. Our words are God's touchstones by which He is showing us to ourselves and to the world.

We find even in common life, that if a man has sense enough to hold his peace, "even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent" (Proverbs 17:28). Quiet, self-contained people are often taken for more than they really are, while many a man of capacity and many a woman of beautiful qualities wreck their whole lives by an uncontrolled tongue. If it settles our influence and character here, then how much more in the sight of Him who said, "For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:37).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Listed are various Scripture verses that describe the tongue in different ways. **Look up each one and enter one descriptive word about the tongue in the blank space following it. For example: Prov. 25:23 backbiting.**

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| Ex. 4:10 _____ | Ps. 120:3 _____ |
| Ps. 140:3 _____ | Prov. 10:20 _____ |
| Prov. 6:24 _____ | Prov. 15:2 _____ |
| Prov. 15:4 _____ | Prov. 17:20 _____ |
| Prov. 21:6 _____ | Prov. 25:15 _____ |
| Isa. 59:3 _____ | Micah 6:12 _____ |
| Mark 16:17 _____ | Jas. 1:26 _____ |

Does James 3:17 give us a clue to why we have inward unrest in our lives?

James 4:1-4

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" (James 4:1). This is the root of all our sorrow and sin, the evil heart. There is no use in trying to put on new garments till you get the old body cleansed. Nor must the cleansing stop at the skin. It must reach the heart and the very marrow of the bones. There is no use in filtering your water with the most improved methods, so long as that old dead horse is up in yonder reservoir. Get him out, and your filtering will be to some purpose. It is no use to apply your medical treatment to mere symptoms, and try invigorating air and good nourishment, so long as that cancer or ulcer is feeding on the vital

organs. Get the root of the evil removed, then your hygiene will be of some value. There is no use trying to get the best sort of captain, engineer and crew for that vessel, if the hull is rotten and worm-eaten. You will flounder at sea with the best captain, engineer and crew. You may have the best plan in the world for your building and the best architects, but if your material is poor, it will fall to pieces in your hands, and the ruin will come in spite of all your ingenuity.

So God comes to the deep secret of all our trouble, this fallen nature, this dead heart, the "desires that battle within you" (4:1). What is lust? It is the desire and inclination to sin. It is the wrong love of anything, love perverted, love turned from God to self-gratification. The last of the commandments, that seems to sum up the whole spirit and essence of morality, strikes at this evil heart, "Do not covet" (Romans 7:7). It means you should not desire to do wrong. The principle of all ethics is to reach the will, the choice, the thing in you that desires. You may put a man in a straitjacket and make it impossible for him to do wrong, but if he wants to do wrong, he is as bad as the other man who is free to do it and does it. What God plans is to take away the root principle of an evil heart.

James tells us that this evil desire enters into our very religion, and even our prayers. "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4:3). So the great mass of human religion is a matter of sinful desire. It is just an accommodation to man's sinfulness, another method of gratifying his evil heart. All pagan religions are founded on sin, and their public rites are usually of the most obscene and abominable character. Even a great deal of the religion of nominal Christians is an effort to electroplate and gild their sinful desires. The ministry becomes a profession and an open door for ambition, and the strife of ministers for honor is as selfish and sinful as the competitions of the world for political preeminence. Religion itself is a convenience to keep people out of hell and make them comfortable through a life of self-indulgence here.

But the difficulty is an evil heart. No matter how it is repressed, until it is taken away, sanctification has not even begun. Sanctification deals with the perverted will, the wrong desire, the evil inclination, the old Adam that is stronger than young Melancthon still. Your best efforts will be baffled until you get him crucified.

This Christ provides for. The first thing to do is to surrender yourself to be crucified with Jesus Christ. Sanctification is not improving your habits by culture, nor is it cleansing your heart; but it is handing the natural life over to death as a useless thing, so bad that you can never make it good, and getting instead something entirely new through union with Jesus Christ. Sanctification is receiving Him to dwell within you, to work through you, to be your Substitute, and to give you His Holy Spirit instead of your old heart.

The beginning of sanctification, therefore, is to see that you are utterly wrong in your desires and choices. The very helm of life is wrong. You must surrender, get out of the way, and die. "Offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life" (Romans 6:13), and then let your life be all new and divine. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). May God help us to see this truth lived out and died out in all our hearts.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

God's great inclusive plan of redemption, sanctification, wisdom and righteousness intends to bring the one who, in recognizing he is a sinner, receives the Lord Jesus Christ as His Savior, on into the fullness of that life through the power of the Holy Spirit whom the Lord sent. Now that Jesus is seated in heaven at the Father's right hand, He and the Father have purposed that the Holy Spirit would indwell the inner being of the Christian, and this becomes the very life of our Lord within him. Here is where many Christians flounder, for they are often encouraged to "pray more, to study the Bible more, to concentrate on the blessings in Christ, etc." in order to be able to lead a victorious, overcoming Christian life. This all places the onus of the effort on the person—to improve! However, no one can ever improve on the natural, flesh life—all that can be done with it is to let it die, even as Jesus taught—that except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if it fall into the ground and die, it brings forth fruit, even an hundredfold (John 12:24, 25). In the new life Christ gives us, following our recognition that our self-life was truly crucified on His cross with Jesus, we then live out from the true Life that abides within us—His! Christ can never accept our old self-life since in that realm there dwelleth no good thing (Rom. 7:18)—and He has already taken the old life to the cross and crucified it. We now have a glorious, restful way to live—allowing the very life of Jesus within us to live it for us, by our daily learning His ways through the living Word, and surrendering our old self-life to this new royal life in Christ! **Look at the following Scriptures that verify our death to all that is not of Christ.**

John 12:24, 25 Rom. 6:6 Gal. 2:20 2 Tim. 2:11 1 Pet. 2:24

James 4:5

The antidote to the lust of the flesh and the love of the world is the love of God.

The Holy Spirit that dwells in us loves us jealously. Here, over against the world and its attractions, God shows us another attraction, a higher charm that counteracts and counterbalances the lower. Down through the ages there has come a golden thread of romance that has given its charm to everything beautiful in art, poetry, history and the story of time. That golden thread is just the old romance of love. Whether it comes down to us from Helen of Troy, or Penelope

waiting for Ulysses, or the heroines of later times, it is the old, old story; something in the human heart that will give up family, fortune and every earthly thing for the charm of love. If you catch that sacred fire of truehearted love, and there is always something beautiful in it that seems to have come from heaven, it lifts to heroism, sacrifice and nobility of life such as no other earthly motive can supply.

Now the secret of redemption is just the same old story of love. Long before the ages that story began in the heart of God and the love of Christ. He is the heavenly Bridegroom seeking to win His poor lost Bride, and raise her to His glory and His throne. In the 16th chapter of Ezekiel He gives us the picture of the love that found her in her blood, and said unto her, "Live!" (16:6). And then, washing her, arraying her in garments of spotless beauty and adorning her with every precious jewel, He adds, "you became mine" (16:8). Like Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, who went forth to a distant land to find a bride for Abraham's heir, and winning her consent gave to her a splendid trousseau of raiment and precious gems, and then brought her home to her waiting husband, so the Holy Spirit has come forth to call the Bride of Jesus to accept His love and then to prepare her for His coming. His voice throughout the ages is, "Listen, O daughter, consider . . . Forget your people and your father's house. The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord" (Psalm 45:10-11). The new world of love and hope which awoke in Rebekah's heart gave her strength to forget her father's house and the home of her childhood. Just as today many a gentle maiden, awaking to the new charm of the old attraction, can leave the scenes of her girlhood and the home of her earliest and fondest affections, and go forth to brave the perils of the wilderness, the ocean, the military camp or the toils and hardships of a life of poverty for the sake of one she loves better than all beside; so the love of Christ, when once it takes possession of the soul, is the antidote to selfishness and worldliness, and becomes the master passion of a devoted life. It is to this that the Holy Spirit appeals. His jealous love cannot bear that any inferior claim should absorb our heart or displace the supremacy of Jesus Christ. And so He loves us jealously, and His jealousy burns like a consuming fire.

In connection with the subject of sanctification, it is very interesting to notice that in Paul's treatise on this subject in the seventh chapter of Romans, he represents it under the figure of the marriage union. The believer is represented under the image of a wife unable to obey and please her former husband, and finally slain by him for her disobedience. That old inexorable husband was the law. As she lay bleeding and lifeless at his feet, lo, another passed by, a form of loveliness, gentleness and grace. It was Jesus, the Risen One, and as He passed, He touched her and raised her from the dead, and then took her to His bosom and made her His Bride. And now He says, "So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God" (Romans 7:4).

Holiness is just the fruit of a marriage to Christ. Just as spontaneously as the offspring comes from the union of two loving lives, just as naturally as the fruit grows from the living vine; so the faith, the holiness, the patience, the good works of the believer, all spring from the love life of the Lord. They are not put on by effort, but they are put forth by vital energy, and prompted by the motive power of life and love. It is to our love that the Holy Spirit appeals. It is by love that He works the work of grace within us. It is the "expulsive power of a new affection" that drives out the world. Just as that selfish girl when her heart is won is willing to give up her little world of indulgence and flattery, and sacrifice luxury, comfort, home, friends and every earthly prospect for the one she loves—suffering for him, toiling for his children and sharing all the hardships of his life with infinite delight, so the love of Christ is the motive power that lifts us above selfishness, ambition and the power of the present age, and makes it a joy to suffer and serve in the interests of so dear a Master, and for the hope of so great a recompense. Would you, therefore, dear friend, know the secret of living above the world and bring forth much fruit? Open your heart to the love of Christ. Yield to the approaches of His wooing and learn to live in His love. So shall your being be filled with the fruits of the Spirit,

And all your life be lost in love,
A heaven below, a heaven above.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Find Scripture that elaborates more on the love relationship we have with our Lord.

James 4:6-12

There is the place of grace in the life of holiness.

"He gives us more grace" (James 4:6). That is, the more inexorable His love and jealousy in holding us up to the highest standard, the more abundant is His grace in enabling us to meet it. Grace gives what love demands, and love is always asking more.

Strange as it may seem, Christ needs our love and claims our tenderest devotion. But our dull, cold hearts often feel unable to respond, and we cry, "I am laid low in the dust" (Psalm 119:25). But it is here that grace comes to our relief, and the Holy Spirit undertakes to supply the love on our part as well as to reveal the greater love on His. Do you want a

tenderer devotion? Take it from Him by faith through grace. Do you want a moving sense of His love, a joy in prayer, a love for His Word, a delight in His service, an experience of deep and tender joy? "He gives us more grace" (James 4:6). "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another" (John 1:16). He does not expect us to produce it from the soil of our old natural heart. It must come from heaven, and His grace is waiting to supply it just as fully as you realize your need and are willing to claim His fullness. Lord, give us grace to take the "more grace" from You.

How shall we maintain the attitude through which we will be enabled to meet the expectations of His love and to receive the fullest measures of His grace?

1. Submit yourselves to God. Unconditional surrender is the first condition of sanctification—a yielded will, a spirit prostrate at His feet, crying continually, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" This is the condition of all deeper blessing.

2. We must be as positive against evil as we are passive in the hands of God. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). There is danger that in cultivating the habit of self-renunciation at a certain stage in our spiritual experience, we may lose that willpower which is necessary for strength of character. The true attitude is an everlasting "yes" to God, and an inexorable "no" to evil. For the inevitable experience of the life of holiness is temptation, and the secret of victory is a fearless courage and an inflexible will, quite as much as a victorious faith.

3. We must make a habit of humility. "[He] gives grace to the humble" (4:6). "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (4:10). As the valleys receive the fertilizing streams, so it is the lowly heart that claims the more abundant grace of God; and the habit of constantly discounting ourselves is but the reverse side of the faith that always counts upon God.

4. There must be nearness to God, the life of communion, intimacy with our heavenly Father. This is the very essence of the life of holiness. "Come near to God and he will come near to you" (4:8). It is thus we walk with God, until dwelling in His fellowship we catch by intuition His very thought and walk spontaneously in His footsteps. So may He "equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:21).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Define the word "grace" and tell what it means to you.

James 4:13-17

When Arthur (A. W. Pink) was sixteen, he overheard and remembered a conversation between his parents which gives us another brief glimpse into his father's character. Coming down to breakfast on a spring morning in the year 1902, Arthur found his parents already at the table and his father reading a newspaper that carried news of preparations for the first coronation in Britain for sixty-four years.

Pink wrote, 'In the middle of breakfast he turned to my mother and said, 'Oh, I am sorry to see this worded like that.' "

"And she said, 'What is it?' "

"Why," he said, "here is a proclamation that on a certain date Prince Edward will be crowned king at Westminster and there is no *Deo volente*, God willing." The word's stuck in Arthur's mind for the very reason that on the appointed date, the future Edward VII was ill with appendicitis and the coronation had to be postponed.

(The Life Of Arthur W. Pink, Iain H. Murray)

In Jesus's parable in Luke 12, what was the farmer called who planned out his life without considering the architect of his life?

James 5:1-6

Your riches *perish*, without being of use either to others or even yourselves; for instance, your garments are moth-eaten in your chests. Referring to Matt. 6:19, 20. Your gold and silver **is cankered**—rusted through, rust. . . **witness against you**—in the day of judgment; viz., that your riches were of no profit, lying unemployed, so contracting rust shall eat your flesh. The rust which once ate your riches shall then gnaw your conscience, accompanied with punishment which shall prey upon your bodies for ever, **as... fire**—not with the slow process of *rusting*, but with the swiftness of *fire*, for the last days—ye have heaped together, not treasures, as ye suppose (cf. Luke 12:19), but wrath *against* the last days. Rather, 'In the last days (before the coming judgment) ye laid up treasure' to no profit, instead of seeking salvation.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

The Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples that no one would know the day nor the hour of His return, but He did tell them that they would know the signs (all of Matt. 25). God has given warning to those who will be thinking only of themselves and their personal gain, and what will happen to them when Christ comes. The remainder of this chapter in James will deal with how the Christians should be living in the light of His soon appearing. **Quietly and prayerfully contemplate on the Lord's soon coming, and put down in writing some of your thoughts. Include also how you believe He would like to find you at His appearing.**

James 5:7-12

We are to live in a continued expectancy of the Lord's coming as always nigh. Nothing can more 'establish the heart' amidst troubles than His coming realized as at hand.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Show how the verses in 1 Cor. 7:29-31 compliment these verses in James.

James 5:13-20

It is 'the effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous* man' which 'availeth much' with God, James 5:16, and that signifies something more than a man to whom the righteousness of Christ has been imputed. Let it be duly noted that this statement occurs not in Romans (where the legal benefits of the atonement are chiefly in view), but in James, where the practical and experimental side of the Gospel is unfolded. The 'righteous man' in James 5:16 (as also throughout the book of Proverbs, and likewise the 'just') is one who is right with God *practically* in his daily life, whose ways 'please the Lord.' If we walk not in separation from the world, if we deny not self, strive not against sin, mortify not our lusts, but gratify our carnal nature, is there any wonder that our prayer-life is cold and formal and our petitions unanswered?

In examining the prayer of Elijah on Mount Carmel we have seen that, first, at the time of the evening sacrifice 'the prophet came near': that is, unto the altar on which the slain bullock lay: 'came near,' though expecting an answer by fire! There we behold his holy confidence in God, and are shown the foundation on which his confidence rested, namely, an atoning sacrifice. Second, we have heard him addressing Jehovah as the covenant God of His people: 'Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel.' Third, we have pondered his first petition: 'Let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel,' that is, that He would vindicate His honor and glorify His own great name. The heart of the prophet was filled with a burning zeal for the living God and he could not endure the sight of the land being filled with idolatry. Fourth, 'and that I am Thy servant,' whose will is entirely surrendered to Thee, whose interests are wholly subordinated to Thine. Own me as such by a display of Thy mighty power.

These are the elements, dear reader, which enter into the prayer which is acceptable to God and which meets with a response from Him. There must be more than going through the motions of devotion: there must be an actual drawing near of the soul unto the living God, and for *that*, there must be a putting away and forsaking of all that is offensive to Him. It is *sin* which alienates the heart from Him, which keeps the conscience at a guilty distance from Him; and that sin must needs be repented of and confessed if access is to be ours again. What we are now inculcating is not legalistic; we are insisting upon the claims of divine holiness. Christ has not died in order to purchase for His people an indulgence for them to live in sin: rather did He shed His precious blood to redeem them from all iniquity and 'purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' Titus 2:14, and just so far as they neglect those good works will they fail to enter experimentally into the benefits of His redemption.

But in order for an erring and sinful creature to draw near the thrice Holy One with any measure of humble confidence, he must know something of the relation which he sustains unto Him, not by nature but by grace. It is the blessed privilege of the believer—no matter how great a failure he feels himself to be (provided he is *sincere* in mourning his failures and *honest* in his endeavours to please his Lord)—to remind himself that he is approaching One in covenant relationship with him, yea, to plead that covenant before Him. David—despite all his falls—acknowledged 'He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure,' 2 Sam. 23:5, and so may the reader if he grieves over sins as David did, confesses them as contritely, and has the same pantings of heart after holiness. It makes a world of difference in our praying when we can '*take hold of God's covenant*,' assured of our personal interest in it. When we plead the fulfillment of covenant promises, Jer. 32:40, 41; Heb. 10:16, 17, for example, we present a reason God will not reject, for He cannot deny Himself. Still another thing is essential if our prayers are to meet with the divine approval: the motive prompting them and the petition itself must alike be right. It is at this point so many fail: as it is written, 'Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts,' James 4:3. Not so was it with Elijah: it was not his own advancement or aggrandizement he sought, but the magnifying of his master, and vindication of His holiness, which had been so dishonored by His people's turning aside to Baal worship. We all need to test ourselves here: if the motive

behind our praying proceeds from nothing higher than *self*, we must expect to be denied. Only when we truly ask for that which will promote God's glory, do we ask aright. 'This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us,' 1 John 5:14, and we ask 'according to His will' when we make request for what will bring honor and praise to the Giver. Alas, how carnal much of our 'praying' is!

Finally, if our prayers are to be acceptable to God they must issue from those who can truthfully declare, 'I am Thy *servant*'—one submissive to the authority of another, one who takes the place of subordination, one who is under the orders of his master, one who has no will of his own, one whose constant aim is to please his master and promote his interests. And surely the Christian will make no demur against this. Is not this the very place into which his illustrious Redeemer entered? Did not the Lord of glory take upon Him 'the form of a servant,' Phil. 2:7, and conduct Himself as such all the days of His flesh? If we maintain our *servant character* when we approach the throne of grace we shall be preserved from the blatant irreverence which characterizes not a little so-called 'praying' of today. In place of making demands or speaking to God as though we were His equals, we shall humbly present our 'requests.' And *what are* the main things a 'servant' desires? A knowledge of what his master requires, and needed supplies so that his orders may be carried out.

'And that I have done all these things at Thy word,' 1 Kings 18:36. 'And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I have done all these things at Thy word.' This was advanced by the prophet as an additional plea: that God would send down fire from heaven in answer to his supplications, as an attestation of his fidelity to his master's will. It was in response to Divine orders that the prophet had restrained rain from the earth, had now convened Israel and the false prophets together, and had suggested an open trial or contest, that by a visible sign from heaven it might be known who was the true God. All this he had done not of himself, but by direction from above. It adds great force to our petitions when we are able to plead before God our faithfulness to His commands. Said David to the Lord, 'Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept Thy testimonies,' and again, 'I have stuck unto Thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame,' Ps. 119:22, 31. For a servant to act without orders from his master is self-will and presumption.

God's commands 'are not grievous' (to those whose wills are surrendered to Him), and 'in keeping of them there is great reward!' Ps. 19:11—in this life as well as in the next, as every obedient soul discovers for himself. The Lord has declared, 'them that honor Me, I will honor,' 1 Sam. 2:30, and He is faithful in making good His promises. The way to honor Him is to walk in His precepts. This is what Elijah had done, and now he counted upon Jehovah honoring him by granting this petition. When the servant of God has the testimony of a good conscience and the witness of the Spirit that he is acting according to the divine will, he may rightly feel himself to be invincible—that men, circumstances, and Satanic opposition, are of no more account than the chaff of the summer threshing-floor. God's Word shall not return unto Him void: His purpose shall be accomplished though heaven and earth pass away. This, too, was what filled Elijah with calm assurance in that crucial hour. God would not mock one who had been true to Him.

(Elijah, A. W. Pink)

It is our desire and prayer that all of Christ's teaching within this book may indeed profit you in every moment of your walk with the Lord. May it act as teacher and guide continually in the path the Lord has prepared for you until He comes. Let us all bow in prayer of thankfulness and praise for this enlightenment on the ways in which we can bless our Lord.