

LESSON TEXT: James 1:1-27

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Three men bearing the name of James are prominent in the N.T. James, the son of Zebedee; James the son of Alphaeus; and James the Just, the half-brother of the Lord Jesus. The **last named** wrote this book to comfort, correct and encourage Jewish Christians who were scattered abroad by persecution and enduring great trials for their faith. Martin Luther called the book of James an epistle of straw because he thought it contradicted the teaching of Paul about Justification by faith. It is one of the earliest books of the N.T. written about A.D. 45.

Those who think it was written to combat Paul's view of justification by faith are wrong. Paul wrote Romans and Galatians years later. While James was at first opposed to the ministry of Jesus (cf. John 7:1-9) he was converted when Jesus appeared to him after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). James's leadership equipped him as elder of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13-21). Paul calls James a pillar of the church (Gal. 2:9). Tradition says that in A.D. 64, James was seduced by the Jewish Sanhedrin into standing at the pinnacle of the temple (the highest point of the temple wall) to testify on behalf of Jesus Christ. The temple crowd began to glorify Jesus so the Jewish Council threw him down from the wall, stoned him to death and he was buried in the tomb of the sons of Hezir in the Kedron Valley across from the pinnacle of the temple.

The book of James is the book of Christian discipleship. It is a very practical treatise on the Christian faith---its nature and work---second only to the Sermon on the Mount. The proof of one's faith is seen in the goodness of one's works (2:26). The message of James is short on doctrine but long on duty.

One thorn of experience is worth a whole wilderness of warning. James
Russell Lowell, American Poet, (1819-1891)

QUESTIONS:

1. How can a person count it **all joy** when he meets various **trials**? 1:2- (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-11)
1. When those who lack wisdom ask God for it, how is God most apt to give it? 1:5-8 (cf. Prov. 4:11; 8:12; 9:10; 10:8; 14:8) **see James 1:12-18.**
2. Is spiritual instability a disease or a sin? 1:6-8 (see Eph. 4:13-14).
3. Have you ever boasted about humiliation? 1:10 (see 2 Cor. 7:7-10)
4. If tests and trials are good, how come God doesn't want to claim responsibility for them? 1:13 (same Greek word for trials in 1:2 & 1:13)
5. Is there anything human beings can do about checking desire before it conceives 1:14-15 see Matt. 26:41
6. How does God beget by the word of truth? 1:18 see John 3:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; Lk. 8:11
7. Can you deceive yourself? 1:22-25 How? See Jer. 17:9
8. Isn't pure religion better defined as attending worship service and believing correct doctrines? 1:27

Take a walk through your garden. If you step on flowers, they will perfume the garden. If you step on the path, it will only grow harder. So the trials of life harden some but make others all the sweeter.

---1000 Windows, by Robert C. Shannon

It has been said that separating faith and works is like separating the heat and light from a candle. You know both are produced by the candle. You know they are not the same thing. You also know you cannot separate them.

---1000 Windows, by Robert C. Shannon

LESSON TEXT: James 2:1-26

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

J. B. Phillips, famous for his *New Testament in Modern English*, wrote in a book of daily devotions called, *For This Day*, "Let me tell you about the God I worship. Look at the second half of Matthew, chapter 25, and you will find a picture---the only picture Christ ever gave of the way in which men are going to be judged after this life. It is only a picture, but the truth in that picture stands out vividly. It is this. *What really matters in God's sight is not how religious a man is, or what his profession is, or how much money he has got, but how he treats other people.* For the sort of God I worship is not only the One who is behind and beyond all creation, but the One who is in us and with us in all the mess and muddle of human life."

Charles H. Spurgeon, probably the greatest British preacher who ever lived (1834-1892) said: "Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God trusts God; and he that trusts God obeys God. He that is without faith is without works; and he that is without works is without faith."

Both of these statements illustrate our lesson. True faith *must* work. No one has ever *experienced* faith until he has *expressed* it in human endeavor! The man who believes in growing seasons plants seed; the woman who believes a man will be a good husband marries him; the family trusts a physician and does what he advises; they trust the local bank and deposit their life's savings there. *Life cannot be lived without works based on faith.* **The person who really believes God will do what God has said to do in his word!** God **must** be trusted about death and eternal life; God **can** be trusted and he has proved it in history through Jesus Christ. Be in Bible School! Learn that the Lord wants YOU to express your faith by your works!

Work is love made visible.

---Kahlil Gibran

QUESTIONS:

1. What is partiality (Greek *prosopolempsiais*—lay hold of the face 2:1 (see Deut 1:17; Lev. 19:15; Prov. 24:23-24; Matt. 22:16).
2. Why would Christians ever be *partial* to rich people? 2:2-4
3. What has *true* faith to do with being *impartial*? 2:5
4. Are we supposed to be partial **against** the rich? 2:6-7
5. What is the royal law? Is there law in Christ? 2:8-13 (see Rom. 8:2; Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21; and John 13:34; Rom. 12:8-10).
6. Are we saved by our works or do we work because we are saved? 2:14-17
7. Are works the only way to show faith? 2:18
8. How do works make faith perfect (KJV)? or complete (RSV & NIV)? 2:22
9. If we are saved by grace why do we have to have works to be justified? 2:23-26

But the angel of the Lord called to him
from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham!
And he said, Here am I. He said, Do not
lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him;
for **now I know** that you fear God, seeing you
have not withheld your son, your only son
from me. Genesis----22:11-12

LESSON TEXT: James 3:1-18

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The National Committee on Doublespeak, a wing of the National Council of Teachers of English, is dedicated to preventing the American language from deteriorating into balderdash and piffle. They face a difficult task, since the number of professional word-manipulators is at an all-time high. We now have people wanting to know what is, is, and what alone means. Here is a list of actual questions asked by lawyers, compiled by the *Massachusetts Bar Association Lawyers Journal*: "How many times have you committed suicide? How far apart were the cars when the collision occurred? Were you alone or by yourself? You were there until the time you left, is that true? These stairs that went down to the basement, did they go up, also? Did he kill you? Were you present when your picture was taken."

The Doublespeak Committee presents an annual award for the best examples. The 1975 winner was the late Yassir Arafat, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, who said: "We do not want to destroy any people. It is precisely because we have been advocating co-existence that we have shed so much blood."

Then there is slander. An ancient myth illustrating this concerns a demigod who enchanted an arrow which flew around killing people. But after it had killed everyone, leaving no new victims, it came back to destroy the god. The demigod spent the rest of his life running from the arrow he had sent against others.

In chapter three of the book of James we examine the Biblical warning that the tongue is an unwieldy "animal" among our members, staining the whole body... and a restless evil, full of deadly poison. James says, ...no human being can tame the tongue...

I think the first virtue is to restrain the tongue; he approaches nearest to the gods who knows how to be silent even though he is in the right.—Cicero, Roman politician

QUESTIONS:

1. If not many should become teachers, how would we ever pass on all the knowledge accumulated by civilization? 3:1
2. Does *everyone* make many mistakes? 3:2
3. Why is the tongue as important as a rudder on a ship? 3:3-5 (See Mt. 12:33-37; Lk. 6:46-49; Eph. 4:25-32; 5:4,12; Col. 4:5-6; 2 Pet. 2:10-11; 2:17-19; Mk. 7:20-23; 1 John 2:4,9; 4:20)
4. What does James mean the tongue sets on fire the course of nature? 3:6
5. Aren't there some people, somewhere, who are able to tame the tongue? 3:7-8
6. Would Christians allow both blessing and cursing to come from their mouth? 3:9-12
7. How does one show one's works in the meekness of wisdom? 3:13
8. Are jealousy and selfish ambition *really* the mother of disorder and **every vile practice**? 3:14-16 Prove it!
9. Define, pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty, and without insincerity. How could this be a **wise** way to do business in today's world? 3:17-18

Epigrams on the Tongue:

The only time people dislike gossip is when you gossip about them.
---Will Rogers

None are so fond of secrets as those who do not mean to keep them.
---Charles Caleb Cotton

Gossip is the art of saying nothing in a way that leaves practically nothing unsaid.---Walter Winchell

LESSON TEXT: James 4:1-17

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

When men and women say they can't keep awake through a 30 minute sermon, but drive all night to take the family to the lake, whom are they kidding? When a man says Sunday is his only day to rest, and gets up at 4:30 a.m. to go fishing, or spends the day on a golf course, whom is he kidding? When men and women say church seats are too hard and uncomfortable, but then go on a Saturday to sit on a bleacher for hours in a cold drizzle watching 22 men push one another back and forth across a mud lot, whom are they kidding? When people say they don't have time for Christ and his church, then spend days and evenings shopping, bowling, watching television, going to clubs, or doing a hundred other things, whom are they kidding----NOT GOD!

Our lesson in James, chapter 4, is focused on **worldliness**. While all the things mentioned above are acceptable and often good things to do, **worldliness** is deeper than that. **WORLDLINESS** is a mind-set. The apostle Paul wrote, "For those who live according to the flesh (world) **set their minds** on the things of the flesh (world), but those who live according to the Spirit **set their minds** on the things of the Spirit....the mind that is set on the flesh (world) is **hostile to God**." (Rom. 8:5-8). Those who have no time for God are actually, **hostile toward God**! There is no in between with Christ---one is either for him or against him (Matt. 12:30; Mark 9:40; Luke 11:23).

The apostle John put it this way: "Do not **love the world or the things in the world**. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15-17).

Jesus said it as succinctly as it can be said: "**Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**" (Matt. 6:21). Now, you will want to be in Bible School to learn what James says about **worldliness**.

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the passions or desires that cause wars? 4:1-2 Does that cause **all** wars? How, then, may war be abolished?
2. Why do our passions/desires keep God from giving us what we ask of him? 4:3 Doesn't the fervent prayer of a righteous man prevail (Jas. 5:16--KJV).
3. Do your worldly-minded neighbors *really hate* God? 4:4-6 Do you think they know they are **enemies** of God?
4. How may one **resist** the devil? 4:7
5. **Must** we be wretched and mourn and weep...and humble ourselves to draw near to God? 4:8-10
6. Is all judging to be classified as speaking evil? 4:11-12
7. Isn't it a cop-out against human initiative to say about life, If the Lord wills we shall do this or that? 4:13-16
8. How much **right** do you know that you do not do? 4:17

A man may have every comfort and luxury here, and yet come to a wretched future. It is no sin to be rich...But alas for the man who has nothing but money! Sixty seconds after the rich man (Luke 16:19-31) was gone, of what use his rich food? He could not open his clenched teeth to eat it; of what use his fine linen shirts? He could not wear them. The poorest man who stood along the road watching his funeral procession owned more of this world than the dead, rich, glutton. Who of you will take his fine home, and costly food, and dazzling equipage, and kennel of blooded dogs, if his eternity must be thrown in with it? The Indian who for a string of beads sells as much territory as will make a State is wise compared with a man who for the trinkets of earth barter Heaven.
---T. DeWitt Talmage

If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

LESSON TEXT: James 5:1-20

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The famous evangelist of the Civil War era, Dwight L. Moody, tells this story on himself. "I remember a few years ago I got discouraged and could not see much fruit of my work; and one morning, as I was in my study, cast down, one of my Sunday School teachers came in and wanted to know what I was discouraged about, and I told him, because I could see no result from my work. By and by in our conversation he said: Did you ever study up on the character of Noah? I felt that I knew all about that, and told him I was familiar with it, and he said, Now, if you've never studied that *carefully*, you ought to do it, for I cannot tell you what a blessing it has been to me. When he went out I took down my Bible, and began to read about Noah, and the thought came stealing over me, Here is a man who toiled and worked a hundred years and didn't get discouraged; or if he did, the Holy Spirit didn't put it on record; and the clouds lifted, and I got up and said, If the Lord wants me to work without any fruit, I will work on. I will do the best I can and leave the result with God. I will wait patiently upon the Lord."

Patience is the subject of our study in James, chapter 5. But what is **patience**? Is it resignation? Is it accepting one's fate? Is it an inertia born of depression? **Patience** is referred to over fifty times in the New Testament. Add to that the usage of words like wait and endure there are about 200 references in the Bible. Clearly, this is a virtue that those who believe God's word should be cultivating.

Benjamin Franklin said: "He that can have patience can have what he will." But how do we *get* patience? By and large, **patience** is learned through life's experiences. But life must be fully committed to trusting in the promises of God in the Bible if life's experiences are to result in **patience**. So, come to Bible School and learn that God's word can be absolutely trusted!

Everything comes to him who hustles while he waits.
---Thomas Alva Edison

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is James picking on **rich** people? 5:1-2
2. How does the gold and silver of the rich **eat** their flesh like fire? 5:2-3
3. Should Christians grumble when they are **defrauded** of wages? 5:4
4. Why wouldn't a righteous man **resist** being killed? 5:5-6
5. Why would James say 2000 years ago that the coming of the Lord was **at hand**? 5:8 Wasn't that false prophecy?
6. Would you call Jeremiah **patient**? (Jer. 20:7-12) 5:9-11 Would you call Job **patient**? These were men who whined about their predicament and constantly besought God to act differently.
7. Are Christians violating God's word when they take an **oath** in a civil court to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? 5:12
8. What if elders anoint with oil and offer **fervent** prayers of **faith** and the sick Christian is **not** healed? 5:13-18
9. How does restoring an errant brother cover a multitude of sins? 5:19-20

A French proverb says, "Laziness is often mistaken for patience." Perhaps the opposite is also true, patience is often mistaken for laziness. A mother once chided her doctor, when her daughter was ill and she was worried, Why don't you do something! she asked. I am doing something, replied the doctor, I am waiting. Many of us may have trouble determining when we are being patient and when we are being lazy.
---1000 Windows, by Robert C. Shannon

No great thing is created suddenly, any more than a bunch of grapes or a fig. If you tell me that you desire a fig, I answer you that there must be time. Let it first blossom, then bear fruit, then ripen.
---Epictetus (A.D. 60-117) Greek philosopher