



# PT Butler

## Bible Study Notebooks

### Study of JAMES

prepared by P. T. Butler Th.D

chapter	page
1	2
2	7
3	10
4	13
5	17
bio	21

These Bible study notes are provided for your use in the preparation of teaching the holy scriptures. They were meticulously prepared over many years to serve the Kingdom of God and aid in the growth of Christians of any age. Please use them in combination with prayer and diligence to promote the clear and honest declaration of God's word.

Companion student handouts are also available to aid in classroom participation. You have permission to reproduce these materials for your Bible school programming.

©PTButler

## TEACHER'S NOTES,

by Paul T. Butler

James 1:1-27

Of course, it is not going to be easy to “count it all joy” when anyone meets various trials---not even a Christian will find it easy! James make a startling statement here insisting that Christians in the midst of frustrations, trials and heartaches are to practice steadfastness. Be reminded of the words of the Psalmist:

“This is my comfort in my affliction that thy promise gives me life.” Psa. 119:50

“When I think of thy ordinances from of old, I take comfort, O Lord.” Psa. 119:52

“Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I keep thy word. Thou art good and doest good; teach me thy statutes.” Psa. 119:67

“It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.” Psa. 119:71

“If thy law had not been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction.” Psa. 119:92

Remember also the words of Joseph to his wicked brothers: “As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good....” Gen. 50:20. Then, there are the experiences of the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. 1:3-11; 2 Cor. 12:7-10, who wrote that “...suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Rom. 5:3-4). TRIALS PRODUCE CHARACTER, HOPE, AND JOY! Finally, it was Jesus, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross....” Heb. 12:1-2. It depends on how you define the word “joy.” For the Christian “joy” has to be defined within the parameters of God’s revealed word. In the context of his last words to his disciples (John 14,15,16,17) Jesus promised them they would suffer the hatred of the world, but they might have joy, even the joy that Jesus had, because of his word to them and in them (see John 15:1-11). Our joy, like that of Jesus, David and Paul comes in “keeping the Father’s commandments” even when we meet various trials. If we are not committed to obeying God’s will in spite of circumstances, our trials and tribulations will make us BITTER and CYNICAL.

When Christians (or non-Christians) pray for wisdom they must pray “in faith, with no doubting.” “No doubting” means, no reservations or stipulations by the one asking. If we want “wisdom” and pray for it we must be prepared to receive it without setting the ground-rules as to how we want it given to us. God will give it HIS WAY! And what is his way? Welllll, just look at the above scripture quotations and substitute the word “wisdom” in place

of “joy.” It is the proclivity of sinful human nature that we learn “wisdom” more often from affliction than from ease and comfort. Isn’t that exactly why James inserted this formula for getting wisdom right in the middle of a context talking about tests and trials???? OF COURSE IT IS! Even Jesus “learned” obedience through what he suffered (Heb. 2:10; 5:7-10). Of course, the Christian who reads and believes and obeys God’s word may have wisdom “which passes all understanding.” And, if Christians read it, believed it, and obeyed it better than they do, they might obtain “the wisdom that is from above” and even escape some of their trials and tests!

The spiritual “instability” James speaks of is, in the Greek language, dipsuchos, (“twice-minded” or schizoid) and, akatastatos, (“unstable” disordered, unrestrained, vacillating). And since James clearly indicates that human beings may repent and change that situation in their lives by faith, it is not a disease. A disease is something you get when you don’t want it! (As an aside, drunkenness {“alcoholism”} is not a disease---you don’t catch it by touching another drunkard or inhaling it from the air). Spiritual or mental “instability” is a result of unbelief. We are held morally responsible for what James denotes in the Bible. Of course, there is some “mental instability” that may be due to chemical imbalance in the biological system of some human beings. But that is not what James refers to here. What James speaks of is the same thing Jesus warned against in Matt. 6:24-34. The Greek word James uses for “doubting” is diakrinomenos (“waver, be skeptical, incredulous, dissenting)---Jude tells us to “have mercy on those who doubt” (Jude 22) because they are unbelievers. IT IS A SERIOUS MATTER that James would have to warn Christians about such unbelief. Christians are to live balanced, orderly, controlled, restrained, settled lives---they are to think that way, feel that way, and act that way. Sin is characterized as hostility toward God. Many people are mentally unstable today because of all the hostility pent up inside them! They need to be reconciled to God! And they are hostile toward God because they are fragmented and fractured spiritually (i.e., they follow every “wind of doctrine and are tossed about philosophically and doctrinally).

The pursuit of wealth destroys the stability of godliness. Trusting in wealth for stability is trusting in something that is UNSTABLE. Remember the foolish farmer of Luke 12. James suggests that the “lowly brother” (i.e., the brother who is suffering humiliation because of his poverty) should “glory” (Greek, kauchastho) in his poverty. Now isn’t that “one for the books!?” Have you ever gloried in your poverty? OUR ENTIRE CIVILIZATION IS PROGRAMMED JUST THE OPPOSITE! We are, to a man, oriented to glorying in financial success!!! Why would James say such a thing? Because Jesus warned his disciples, “It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom.” (Luke 18:24-25). It is as “hard” as putting a camel through the eye of a common sewing needle!!! “Poverty is often a blessing, for the poor man in this world’s goods more easily recognizes his need of spiritual help. The rich man, feeling a sufficiency in material things, will often feel that he can buy his own way in any circumstance...and will be unlikely to seek grace from God”---Don Fream, A Chain of Jewels from James and Jude, 1965, College Press, p. 27. See such Proverbs as 15:17; 17:1; 19:1; 22:1; 23:4-5; 28:11,25; 30:7-9. A rich man can inherit the kingdom of God but it will be in spite of his riches and not because of them. We learned from Paul to Timothy that “the love

of money is the root of all kinds of evil.” (1 Tim. 6:10). If Jesus left the riches and powers of heaven to become poor that we might become rich (in heaven), it well behooves us to glory in our poverty. But humility and glorying are very subtle virtues. We need to be careful that we do not think more highly of ourselves than we ought (Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:3). We must not despise those who are rich simply because we are righteously-poor.

“Although Abraham was tried by God (i.e., his meeting the situation was a testing and proving of his faith), yet, if he had any temptation to do evil and not obey God, this did not come from God. This part, if any, came from within Abraham’s own doubt.” Don Fream, op.cit., p. 33. God does not overtly, directly, indirectly, or irresistibly invite, seduce, allure, charm, or stimulate anyone to do wrong---to sin. **THAT WOULD BE AGAINST HIS VERY NATURE OF HOLINESS, TRUTHFULNESS, GOODNESS AND MERCIFULNESS.** God does allow human beings to live in a world where there are allurements to disobey him and sin. God does allow innocent human beings to suffer the results of the sins of other human beings to become temptations and trials. God even allowed Eve and Adam to suffer the temptations of Satan in the sinless Garden of Eden. But it was Satan the “father of lies” who introduced the allurements---not God! Adam and Eve did not have to “take the bait”---they had been warned. Why does an all powerful, all good God allow this to happen? **I DON’T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS TO THAT,** and I don’t know anyone who does. The Bible doesn’t even tell us all the answers to it. My opinion is that God wants man’s love and obedience to be real, personal, and a matter of choice of love for him and trust in him. Since he created us in his own image, with the awesome power to make free choices, we must conclude that is, at least, part of the reasoning of God in allowing us to be tried!

“...each person is tempted when he is enticed by his own desire....Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death” (Jas. 1:14-15). Each human being is singularly responsible for his own desires. The Greek word for “desires” is actually, *epithumias*, or, “lust.” Lust (i.e., “desire”) has many synonyms---“appetite, passion, want, wish, liking, craving, etc.” But fundamentally, “desire” comes from the WILL. Humans are triune beings. They are intellect, emotions, and will. Human beings CAN direct the intellect (mind), and the emotions (feeling) to whatever they choose. And that choice is the “willing” part of the human psyche! Neither God nor any other human has the power to overwhelm the individual’s WILL. Humans may take other humans and incarcerate their bodies, or chain their bodies, but they cannot “chain” their wills. Humans may intellectually or emotionally try to seduce other human beings in to exercising their wills upon a particular choice, but that is the only way one human may tamper with another’s will. The Bible clearly tells us that we CAN “set our minds” (and thus, our wills) toward God and away from sin (e.g., Rom. 6:12-14; 8:5-11; 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:14-16; Eph. 4:23; Phil. 2:5; 4:8; Col. 3:1-11, etc.). We may not be able to eliminate or erase from reality all the wrong that goes on in our circumstances---BUT we CAN direct our eyes and ears, which are the receptors to the intellect, which in turn commands the emotions and desires, **AWAY FROM THAT WHICH IS WRONG, AND TOWARD THAT WHICH IS GOOD!** We do that by a conscious exercise of our will!

God begets by the word of truth through the Holy Spirit's revelation of the New Testament. In the N.T. we are specifically taught our conviction of "the love of Christ...controls us...." by which we "...therefore regard no one from a human point of view" 2 Cor. 5:14-16. Peter said it this way: "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth...love one another earnestly from the heart....You have been born anew....through the living and abiding word of God..." (1 Pet. 1:22-23). Peter said it another way: "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him (Christ) who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. 1:3-4). Remember Alexander Campbell's statement in his Christian System? It is the testimony of the facts of the gospel by the N.T. writers that God, the Holy Spirit, uses as his instrument to put into our hearts the image (divine nature) of God. Jesus explained the new birth to Nicodemus in John 3. The work of the Holy Spirit is through the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17), but it is still quite inexplicable----like the wind which blows "where it will"---you don't "see" the wind, you see the effects of the wind. So it is with the new birth. We can't get hold of the process materially, and dissect it scientifically, but we can "see" the effects of it in people's lives as they are obedient to the word of Christ. The word of God has to be implanted before the new birth can happen.

Indeed, yes! We can deceive ourselves. In the context of James 1:22-27 the person who only hears the word of Christ, but does not do it is deceiving himself if he thinks he is a Christian. That includes not only doing all the good "works" James talks about in his book, it also includes doing the apostolic "plan of salvation," i.e., hearing the word---repenting of sin---confessing one's faith in Christ orally---and being immersed in water unto the remission of sins. In other words, it includes doing what the N.T. says is necessary to be in covenant relationship with Christ. Perhaps the greatest self-delusion people play upon themselves is to say "there is no God and there are no absolutes." That is what the reprobate Roman civilization of Paul's day said (Rom. 1:18-32) and he says they claimed to be wise but they became fools. That civilization lied to itself in the face of indisputable evidence in nature itself of God's existence, his omnipotence, and his eternal wrath upon sin. Jeremiah said the "heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). Moses told the Israelites "not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes..." (Num. 15:39). All the millions of people today who ignore the revealed word of God---THE BIBLE---and "follow their own hearts" (i.e., feelings or emotions) in what they believe and practice are self-deceived!

James is not defining the totality of religion here. Faith is a big part of religion for James. But James is emphasizing the "works" part of "pure" religion. Any Christian who thinks he/she has done all the religion needed after having attended worship services and then gone home to do as they please the remainder of the week is self-deceived. "Visiting" comes from the Greek word episkopos which we have already learned is translated "bishop" but means, "visiting to care for" someone else. So caring for orphans and widows in their affliction (and taking care of anyone else who is incapable of caring for themselves) is "pure

religion.” Jesus admonished, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends....But when you give a feast, invited the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind....” Luke 14:12-14. And remember that Jesus said the criterion of judgment at the end of the world will be whether a person has visited the prisoners and the ill, and fed the hungry and clothed the naked (Matt. 25:31-46). The book of Revelation, depicting the great judgment scene, says humanity was judged “by what was written in the books, by what they had done.” Rev. 20:12-13. Today, with all the emphasis that is being put on “experiencing worship” we had better be sure we are also “experiencing taking care of the needy.”

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler

### James 2:1-26

Partiality is literally, in the Greek language, “take the face.” It means, “to show favor to someone because of their status in society.” The O.T. law was emphatic in forbidding “partiality” (Deut. 1:17; 10:17; 16:18-20; 24:17; Malachi 2:9). The N.T. is equally assertive in forbidding partiality (James 2:4; 3:17; 1 Tim. 5:21). To be partial is to vary one’s favors anticipating what one may receive in return for the favors. To be partial is to dispense judgments unevenly and unjustly. Race, gender, wealth, political power, or celebrity usually enters into the rationalizations attempting to justify partiality. While there may be a “pecking order” (hierarchy) of powers and deference (partiality) shown according to “status” in the secular order of life, partiality has no place in the kingdom of God! Matt. 20:25-29. There is only one King in God’s kingdom---everyone else is an “unworthy servant” even after he has done all he has been commanded to do (Lk. 17:7-10)!

Yes, even Christians may fall into the trap of “taking face” or being partial. Some Christians excuse their partiality toward rich and famous people by rationalizing that they are doing it to get money for the Lord’s work. Some Christians are partial toward the famous and infamous (sports stars, movie stars, ex-criminals, etc.) rationalizing that they’re doing it for the purposes of evangelism. Other Christians may be partial toward the rich and famous (to be seen with them) to bolster their own reputations. Respecting duly elected or appointed authority is not being partial. Respect toward anyone’s rights or personhood is not being partial. Showing or giving favors to anyone for ulterior purposes is partiality.

It is only by true faith that any human being is able to be impartial toward another human being. Those who do not trust God in all of life’s circumstances, trust themselves or fate, or science, or education, or a million other “gods” and none of those false “gods” are able to solve the problem of human hostility. It is human hostility and animosity toward God that results in hostility toward other human beings.. Christians are to see everyone from Christ’s point of view (2 Cor. 5:16-17)---all human beings are sinners worthy and capable of being saved by God’s grace. Christians are to accept people as God would accept them---no respecter of race, economic status, educational status, etc. The Bible alone provides the knowledge that reveals the love of Christ which is able to bring a human being into reconciliation with God (again, 2 Cor. 5:14-17) and thus to the renew the mind (Rom. 12:1-2) and transform the heart. This will also bring the transformed person into reconciliation with his fellow man and all of God’s creation.

Being partial AGAINST the rich and famous, just because they’re rich and famous, is forbidden as well as being partial against the poor just because they’re poor and unknown. But to speak up against the rich, powerful, and famous if they have gained their status through criminal or sinful means is not being partial---it is doing one’s duty toward God (see



Eph. 5:11). Nor should partiality be extended toward the poor who commit crimes (see the references in Deuteronomy in answer #1). Christians should always be against sin, but for the sinner's salvation. That is simply treating others like we want to be treated by Christ! (Rom. 15:7). Follow the example set by the O.T. prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles. Usually when people are partial against rich, powerful and famous, it is from envy! Jealousy and partiality usually go hand in hand. Some partiality is out of ignorance. Racial partiality (or discrimination) is from ignorance or from some acquired (taught) prejudice. Every human being is equally created by the love of God and endowed with certain inalienable rights---life, liberty, and proprietorship, and no one has authority to deprive any other of their rights (except government for lawful cause, and in America "the people" through representatives make the laws).

The "royal" law is called in the Greek text, *nomon basilikon*. In other words, it is the "law of the King." In the context James is speaking of THE LAW OF THE GREAT KING, EVEN GOD HIMSELF! Clearly, God's law, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, forbids partiality. James says if we really fulfill the "Great King's Law" according to the scripture, we will "Love our neighbor as ourselves." Yes! That is even in the O.T. (Lev. 19:17-18) and in the N.T.---even toward our enemies (Matt. 5:43; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; and here in James 2:8). THAT IS THE "ROYAL LAW." And there is indeed a "law of Christ" (see Rom. 8:2; Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21; John 13:34; Rom. 12:8-10). "Freedom" in Christ does not permit the believer to do as he pleases unless what pleases him also pleases Christ! And we find what pleases Christ ONLY in the Bible---not in our own hearts! AGAPE LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF ALL OF GOD'S LAWS! That is the "Royal Law."

We are not saved by our works alone. Jesus told the parable of the servant (Luke 17:7-10) who comes into the house from his work. He does not sit down at the table expecting to be served. His master says to him, "Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me..." "Does the master thank the servant because he did what he was commanded?" That is a rhetorical question expecting a big NO for an answer. Jesus said, "So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'" WHEN WE HAVE DONE ALL THAT IS COMMANDED!!! Which one of us can even say that?! But we do our works out of love because we have been saved. "The love of Christ controls us..." (2 Cor. 5:14). We are to love one another, even as Christ loves us (John 13:34; 15:12,17; 1 John 2:7-8; 3:11,23, etal.). But, on the other hand, if we do not have the faith and love for Christ to do works of righteousness and goodness, we shall not be saved, either! Grace, faith, and works are a total package---in every facet of human life---as well as spiritually and eternally. Adam and Eve were given "works" to do in the Garden of Eden before they had ever sinned! God expected them to "work" for him out of love for having created them and having placed them in Paradise.

I know of no other way to "show" faith except by "works." The "works" must be in accordance with the demands of the person or thing in which one has put his faith. If you



trust your employer and expect him to reward your faithfulness on your job, you do your job as he wants it done! In other words, faith in Christ is shown by doing the works demanded by Christ in his revelation to the world (the Bible---specifically, the New Testament). Christ has expressed his demands in his “commandments” throughout the N.T. (Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation). It would be the same process if we were talking about our “faith” in the government of the USA. We would show our faith in the USA by doing the commandments of the USA as those commandments are revealed to us in its laws. We are saved by faith. To be saved is to be made useful, to be made whole, to save someone or something for treasuring. If we are saved we will be useful to the One who saved us; a person who is not saved is not whole and therefore is not useful; a person who is saved is treasured and a person treasured is a person possessed by his redeemer and owner.

True faith avoids the idea that it is sufficient merely to believe there is one holy God. Even the demons believe and “shudder” (Greek *phrissousin*, “frizzle, or squirm and shudder like bacon frying in a skillet”). Demons believe that God and Christ are the one true God, that God and Christ are holy (Mark 1:23-26; Luke 4:33-37; Matt. 8:29), and that they have power over them. Are men really as bad and evil as demons if they say they believe and do not do the works Christ commands? (Matt. 12:30; 16:23; Jude 6; James 3:15; Rev. 12:1-17). Faith is “made perfect” or “completed” by works. The Greek word is *eteleiothe*, the same word translated “perfected” throughout the book of Hebrews. It means, “reach a goal, fulfill a purpose.” A person’s faith does not reach the goal God has for faith in him until that person’s very best is given in devotion to God. Abraham was willing to give his ONLY SON as a sacrifice to God. That was when Abraham’s faith reached its goal, or was completed. The goal of faith is to be “reckoned” to be righteous by being active in works of righteousness (i.e., doing what God commands you to do).

“Works” are the “spirit” of faith. Just as the body is dead apart from the spirit---so faith is dead apart from works.! The “spirit” of man is the reality of man. The real man is not his body. That is simply where he lives while in this world of flesh. So “works” are the “reality” of faith. Faith is not real simply because it is verbalized---faith is real only when it is doing good works. It is ridiculous to say that all there is to a human being is his fleshly body (even though some have said it). It is just as ridiculous to say that all there is to faith is just saying one has it! To “justify” in the Biblical context, is to “prove something to be real---to produce evidence.” The evidence of one’s salvation is the declaration of God in the Bible that one is saved by the vicarious death and resurrection of Jesus Christ when one believes, repents and is immersed in water for the remission of sins. The evidence that anyone believes (or has faith) and has repented, is in obedience to the commands (works) of Christ!

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler

### James 3:1-18

James did not say "Let no one become a teacher." But he does caution that only those who are able to control what they say (and do) should become teachers. It would not do for someone with a violent "temper" to be a teacher. It would not do for someone who could not take criticism to be a teacher; it would not do for someone who does not try to think honestly and correctly to be a teacher---it would not do for someone who does not believe God's word to be a teacher! The Greek word is, *ptaiei*, and is usually translated "stumble or fall" rather than "mistake" in RSV. NIV translates it "never at fault." The most ominous warnings in the N.T. are for "false teachers"---those who verbalize false doctrines, and those whose lives are corrupt. James may have had the Pharisees in mind when he wrote this. Certainly Paul, Peter, James, Timothy, Titus, and many others mentioned in the N.T. were not sinless! They were all "teachers." But we must not minimize the significance teachers have in a congregation! I have known Christian Church congregations who have had people who taught denominational dogmas in Sunday School classes. The church must have Biblically-literate and doctrinally-sound teachers in ALL its areas where there is teaching being done!

James says, "we all make many mistakes (stumbings)." Isaiah said, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" and Paul repeated it in Romans. Case closed! All human beings sin. John says "If we say we are having (in the Greek text "have" is *echomen*, present tense verb) no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:10. And it is common knowledge that people sin with their TONGUE (i.e., SPEECH) more than any other human capacity.

A ship's rudder and a horse's bridle bit control the direction of the ship and the horse. Both bridle and rudder are always under the impulse of rider and helmsman. So human speech responds to the impulse of the human mind and soul which steers individuals in the direction their speech is turned!! Jesus said succinctly, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Matt. 12:34 "The tongue weighs far less than a pound. Yet its power is so great that it not only turns about my whole body, but it can turn about the bodies of countless others. Families have been broken by a single tongue. Churches have been split and died because of the venom of a single tongue. Rehoboam's loose tongue split a kingdom and started a war." Don Fream, op.cit. p. 120.

the inner being to become a reality visible to all others through speech. The Greek phrase is: phlogizousa ton trochon tes geneseos and literally would read, “inflaming the whole course of life...” It probably refers to the “entire cycle of human life, from birth to death...From the moment of speech until death, lies, tale-bearing, and destruction are strewn in the wake of the tongue.” Like the smallest of matches which can set on fire a huge forest, words can set on fire the whole course of life. World wars start with inflammatory and untrue words; sexual seduction begins with words; lies are perpetrated with words; all kinds of hurtful, shameful, destructive actions start with words. Man does all his thinking by using words. He cannot think without words. The words we learn form our character!

There was only one person who controlled his speech completely and perfectly---sinlessly---and that was Jesus of Nazareth. Some would challenge the idea that Jesus controlled his tongue after reading some of his statements (i.e., his denunciation of the Pharisees in Matt. 23, and his many rebukes of his own disciples, etc.). But the Scriptures clearly state that Jesus was without sin (2 Cor. 5:21). Quite emphatically, there are no other human beings who have ever completely controlled the tongue! In verse 5 James used the Greek words, megala auchei, translated “great boasts” but literally is “greatly-lifting-up-the-neck,” i.e., pride, haughtiness. For any Christian to claim absolute conquest of the tongue so that he has never sinned with his tongue would contradict scriptures and the human conscience. Every human has experienced the indictment of the conscience concerning misuse of his or her speech! So, James is not trying to keep humble, eager-to-learn, eager-to-edify people from teaching the Scriptures. The point James is making is in the teacher’s source of authority for his teaching---is it God’s word, or is it the teacher himself. The Greek word damasai, is translated “tame” but in some instances is translated, “subdue.” Christians can subdue their tongues to a larger extent than those who are not Christians by simply believing the Bible that it can be done, asking for help from the Holy Spirit, and practicing conscious self-control.

I’m afraid that it is true that Christians have allowed both blessing and cursing to come from their mouths. In fact, James is writing to “brethren” (3:10) here about that problem. Peter once swore a false oath. But we are justified, I think, in saying that simply because we disagree (verbally or mentally) with the opinions of others does not mean we are “cursing” them. If we verbalize our disapproval of sin in the life of particular individuals does not mean we are “cursing” them. Was it “cursing” Adolph Hitler when people evaluated him as “mad,” “insane,” “murderer,” etc.? Remember the scathing words that came from the mouth of Jesus toward individuals and institutions! Remember the words of the apostle Paul, “God shall strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?” Acts 23:3 James is remonstrating against undue reviling and censoriousness here!

The person who has true wisdom will do his works with “meekness” (the Greek word is prauteti, and is translated, “humility, gentleness”). NIV translates this sentence, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.” That best explains what James means here.

In other words, the church should look for its teachers among those who show their wisdom by deeds of humility and gentleness. To show one's works in the meekness (humility) of wisdom is a dangerous adventure. There is always the possibility that the devil will tempt Christians to show their works in the pride of false wisdom. He tempted Jesus to do so in Matthew 4! Jesus did not cave in to the temptation. "Showing" one's works always carries with it that danger---that the "showing" is done for pride or self-justification.

Jealousy and selfish ambition are indeed the mother of disorder. James uses the Greek word *akatastasia*, which means "insurrection, rioting, revolt, anarchy." The same word is used in Luke 21:9; 2 Cor. 6:5 and numerous other places. The wisdom (Greek, "sophistry") that engenders jealousy, selfish ambition, and falsehood is earthly (oriented for this world only), unspiritual (see Jude 19; 1 Cor. 2:14) and demonic (from hell). The Lord Jesus wants to "gather" (make whole) and the devil wants to "scatter" (fragment) (Matt. 12:30-31). The devil is the instigator of the sophistries of hell which result in disorder, rioting, insurrection, and anarchy. The devil is the seducer of human beings trying to make them revolt against God (Rom. 8:6-8) and be hostile toward him. What kind of "sophistry" did it take to create the great insurrection of papal Catholicism? What kind of "sophistry" did it take to divide up Christian believers into more than 300 "denominations"? Division, anarchy, disorder comes from hell whether it is in the area of religion or government.

The word pure is from the Greek *hagne* "holy, chaste, virginal, unadulterated, unmixed." The word peaceable is from the Greek *eirenike*, "peaceable, absent of strife or wrangling," and we get the name Irene from this word. The word gentle is from the Greek *epieikes*, "forbearing, kind, not harsh" even in disagreement. The word translated "open to reason" is from the Greek *eupeithes*, "compliant, agreeable, approachable." The words translated "full of mercy and good fruits" come from the Greek *meste eleous kai karpon agathon*, meaning just what it says, "full of mercy and full of good things for others to enjoy." The word translated "without uncertainty" is from the Greek *adiakritos*, meaning "without partiality, without undue discrimination, without being judgmental." The word translated "without insincerity" is from the Greek *anupokritos*, "without hypocrisy, unfeigned, not putting on an act." In today's cut-throat, dog-eat-dog, must-make-large-profits-no-matter-how-I-do-it world, it is difficult to maintain Biblical and Christian character. The temptation is great to cheat, hedge, lie, and exploit the competition or consumer. That kind of "devilish wisdom" is practiced all the time by those business people who are not Christian! They operate on the basis that the end (profit) justifies the means (whatever is necessary).

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler

### James 4:1-17

The English versions have translated the Greek word hedonon, into the word "passions." We get the transliterated word "hedonism" from this Greek word. The word is used in Titus 3:3; 2 Pet. 2:13; Luke 8:14. If we substituted "hedonism" instead of "passions" we would have a better translation of what James is talking about here. "Passions" may be good or bad, as circumstances and the word of God dictate, but "hedonism" is always bad. It means "debauched, sensualist, pleasure-monger, totally worldly." Hedonism is the self-indulgent life-style that Playboy magazine promotes. So, James is talking about the mentality of debauchery, sensuality, selfishness, animalistic-worldliness that drives people to hate, lust, envy, jealousy, thievery, murder, war, and all kinds of hostility to spirituality. A viewpoint that focuses on this physical world as the only world there is or ever will be inevitably causes war. If self-pleasure is the ultimate goal of life, then as Paul says in 1 Cor. 15, "let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die." We should be Epicureans if this fleshly body is all there is to us. We should take all measures necessary, and exert all power possible for us to exert, by whatever means available, to bring to ourselves what pleasures us! That is as old as the Garden of Eden---it is the fundamental philosophical result of evolutionism---it is the basic philosophy of Freudian psychology. That kind of world-view inexorably results in moral relativism. Modern "liberal" politics in America is founded on the same philosophical base. Liberalism in politics is not utilitarian, or democratic, it is hedonistic, self-centered, selfish, and debauched no matter how much liberals pretend it isn't!!! The only way war and crime can be abolished is through spiritual regeneration in covenant with Jesus Christ.

First, James says, we do not have because we do not ask! We're afraid to ask for spiritual opportunities to serve the Lord because he might give them to us! Second, James says, our hedonist focus keeps God from giving us what we ask! If we dared to have our prayers secretly taped we would be shocked at just how hedonistic our prayers are. We ask for fleshly things and circumstances. We ask for health and healing, for money and materials; we ask for "security and showers---" to spend it on our hedonism." In other words we are too much focused on this world and its circumstances. We are promised that if we ask anything according to God's will we shall have it. What is God's will for the flesh? Paul wrote in Romans, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the flesh to gratify its desires" Rom. 13:14. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God...for this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality..." 1 Cor. 15:50-54---and, "...we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord..." 2 Cor. 5:8 Yes, God gives us what we need, but God has never intended that we spend most of our energies and time accumulating the things of this world for our pleasure. Paul wrote Timothy, "...if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content" 1 Tim. 6:8 **WHAT WE SHOULD BE PRAYING FOR IS THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL, THE SAVING OF SOULS, SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS!**

That is God's will for this "vale of tears."

"Friendliness (worldly-mindedness) is enmity (hostility, animosity, hatred, malevolence) against God!" James wrote it unequivocally! He repeats, "Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God!" Check Romans 8:7 again---- "the mind of the flesh is hostile toward God, it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God!" So, your worldly-minded neighbors are enemies of God! They probably would not admit that they hate God and that they are his enemies---but those are the words of Holy Writ! If God became incarnate in a human body again and came to your neighborhood, even performed the miracles he did as Jesus Christ, and then began to "meddle" in people's worldly pursuits what do you think your neighbors would do with him? Do you know anyone in your neighborhood who is really "hungering and thirsting for righteousness"? Do you know anyone in your neighborhood who would "leave all, or give all they have to the poor, and follow Jesus around the city of Joplin, and to the uttermost parts of the world"? John wrote, "...the whole world is in bed with the evil one" 1 John 5:19 The Greek word used by John here is keitai and is a derivative of koite, which means, "coitus, sexual intercourse, whoredom." So, worldly-mindedness is, metaphorically, "whoring with the devil." And we know what God thinks about spiritual fornication or adultery---just read the O.T. prophets! SHOULD'N'T WE BE WARNING OUR WORLDLY-MINDED NEIGHBORS?

James says "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." But Peter says the devil "is like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. 5:8. James tells us how to resist ("stand against") the devil. "Submit yourselves, therefore, to God." The Greek word in this sentence is hupotagete, it is in the imperative mood (a command), and the even stronger translation would be "subject" yourselves to God. It is a military term of the Greeks meaning, "to rank under." In other words, we must make Christ our Lord in order to resist the devil. Anyone who does not subject themselves to the Lordship, the Kingship of Christ is easy pickings for the devil! James continues, "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you" (4:8). How does one get "near" to God? Not just by prayer alone! Getting "near" to God is done first and foremost by knowing and doing his word! This is exactly how you "draw near" to another human being. When you and another person are together and you do all the talking, you will never "get near" to that person. You must let them do most of the talking if you wish to become "near" them. You'll never know who and what they are if you don't let them tell you!

Indeed, yes! We must recognize, admit, and confess how wretched we are (see Isa. 6:1ff)---we are persons of unclean lips, dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips....woe is us, we are undone! We must say with Peter, "Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man." And it wouldn't hurt us to "mourn and weep" over our sins. The O. T. prophets wept unashamedly over their own sins and the sins of their people. One whole book (Lamentations) dwells on this! David confessed how wretched he was! Psa. 34; 51. No one can draw near to God without humbling himself. Don't forget, Jesus humbled himself to draw near to us (Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 5:7-10). It doesn't take away one's identity and personhood to



subject oneself in wretched humility to God! It actually reinforces a human being's true identity---creature---redeemed creature!

It is clear from the NT that we must make some judgments, therefore, all judging is not evil. Right after Jesus said, "Judged not that ye be not judged" he said, "Do not give your bread to dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine, lest they turn and rend you." The individual disciple of Jesus has to make judgments as to who are dogs and hogs! Jesus told the Jews, "Judge righteous judgment" John 7:24, and the Greek verb *krinate*, "you judge" is in the imperative mood so it is a commandment to judge righteous judgments. Paul told the Corinthians church leaders they would have to make judgments about a man living with his father's wife in incestuous adultery (1 Cor. 5), and then told the Corinthians they were bringing shame on Christ's church because they would not make judgments about certain matters between contending Christians (1 Cor. 6). Every Christian is going to have to make judgments in order to avoid contentious, divisive, disorderly, lazy brethren (Rom. 16: 17; 2 Thess. 3:14). Every Christian is going to have to make judgments about the "unfruitful works of darkness" if they are going to avoid people doing them and expose them (Eph. 5:11). James uses the Greek word *katalaleite*, which means "speak evil of 1 Pet. 3:16; or speak against, or slander." Peter uses the same word 1 Pet. 2:1 and the RSV translate it "slander." The word is also translated, "backbiting" (Rom. 1:30, KJV; 2 Cor. 12:20). Therefore, the "judging" James prohibits is "slandorous, evil, destructive, ruinous" judging especially done "behind someone's back." Making a judgment in order to bring good, to save someone, to uphold the truth is not evil judgment at any time!

Indeed IT IS NOT a cop-out to say, "If the Lord wills we shall do this or that! If you will read the O.T. prophets carefully, you will find the Lord is immanently involved in every mundane affair of the lives of human beings! The Lord puts people in places of rule and deposes them according to his will. The Lord sends bad weather and good weather upon localities according to his will. It is the Lord who creates both weal and woe (Isa. 45:7). The Lord knows and directs our goings out and goings in! His eye is on every sparrow that falls. We would all be greater witnesses for the Lord and more pleasing servants to the Lord if we prefaced all our statements about our own futures with these words! NONE OF US KNOWS WHAT TOMORROW SHALL BRING! No great ruler (Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, Pharaoh, David, Solomon, Caesar, Herod, et al.) is ever able to "stay the Lord's hand" (see Dan. 4:34-35). No city ever escapes destruction unless the Lord has done it (Amos 3:6). "The years of our life are threescore and ten (70), or even by reason of strength fourscore (80), yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away...so teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Psa. 90:10-12).

James wrote, "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." 4:17. We humans are all somewhat alike in this matter. We know more "right" than we do! Most of us spend so much time trying NOT to do what is wrong, we forget that there are a lot of "right" things we need to be doing. It is right to teach others the Gospel; it is right to be of service to all men, and especially those of the household of faith. We could belabor this point for the rest of this page, but every Christian has a conscience and every Christian could

make his/her own list of “right” things (often called “sins of omission”) they have failed to do. How long has it been, however, since we’ve asked the Lord’s forgiveness for failing to do the “right” thing? There’s still time----maybe today we can do that “right” thing that our consciences are telling us we should have done!

## TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler

### James 5:1-20

James “picks on” rich people because rich people most often need “picking on!” Jesus said it is more difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle! (Lk. 18:25). Jesus did not say that about poor people! Riches always brings power to those who are rich. Few people can be very rich and righteous at the same time (Lk. 16:19-31). Riches tend to seduce their holders into believing they are impervious to consequences for exploiting that alleged “power.” Riches tend to give a false sense of security (Lk. 12:13-21). Riches tend to deceive people into thinking they are righteous since they have been so abundantly blest by God (Lk. 18:18-30). Paul told Timothy, “as for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches, but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed” (1 Tim. 6:17-19). And remember what Paul also said to Timothy in that same chapter (6:6-10). Being “rich” is relative in different social structures. “Middle-class” in America is “rich” in Haiti or the Sudan! In America, Bill Gates, Michael Forbes, Michael Jordan, et al., are the “rich” people. So, really, the admonition of James could apply to most Americans. Of course, there are rich and powerful people in Haiti and the Sudan, but there are more, extremely poor people in those places. Fox News T.V. on 5-2-08 showed a woman in Haiti making cookies from mud, a little butter and salt—and people were buying them to eat!

Riches of the rich “eat” away at the inner person. James uses the “flesh” as a metaphor so we get the picture as to what “riches” can do to the real person inside. We certainly know what “fire” (like napalm) can do to the flesh. That is exactly what riches do to the inner being of people who disregard the warnings of Scripture about being rich! Even as Paul told Timothy, “the love of money (riches) is a root of all kinds of evil.” A person who lets his life be dominated by the desire to be “rich” will fall into many other traps of sinfulness. People will lie, cheat, murder, rob, steal, prostitute their own bodies, sacrifice their own families, or do whatever they believe is necessary just to become “rich.” Being rich eats on a person’s soul sometimes like a cancer does on the flesh. How much money does a billionaire need? MORE, always---MORE! And Paul wrote that “covetousness is idolatry” (Col. 3:5).

Clearly, those laborers whose wages were kept by fraud cried out. There’s nothing wrong with “crying out” about fraud. Especially if we cry to the government authorities. The Bible gives every Christian not only a “right” but an obligation to use every legitimate government power to protect his rights as a citizen. It is the Bible that first taught: “We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of

Happiness” (originally, the last phrase read, “Proprietorship” or ownership of property). The apostle Paul did not hesitate to demand his civil rights as a Roman citizen. We need to realize we may not always get our rights or justice, but we have Biblical mandate to demand them and expect government authorities to conform to their God-ordained responsibilities (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17, etal.). But James also warns the “brethren” who were being defrauded not to “grumble” 5:9 (cf. 1 Cor. 6:7-8; 10:10) as if the Lord was not keeping his word---the Lord will take care of the wicked in due time.

Literally, according to the Greek text, James 5:6 would read, “You condemned, you murdered the righteous male one; he is not resisting you.” James mixed aorist verbs (past tense, “condemned” and “murdered”) with a present tense participle (“resisting”). Some commentators think he may be speaking of the “rich” Jewish rulers who “murdered” (not just “killed”) Jesus, The Righteous One. But the context would seem to indicate that James is talking in general terms about the “righteous poor” people who were being exploited, defrauded, and perhaps even murdered by the “rich” land owners. It happened in the days of the OT prophets (e.g., Micah 2:1---3:12, etc.). It was happening in the first century in Judea. It still happens today---not only in “third world countries” but even in America! Those “rich murderers,” by greedily accumulating the wages they defrauded from the poor, are only “fattening themselves for the slaughter” of Almighty God!

James said 2000 years ago the “coming of the Lord was at hand” because the coming of the Lord is always at hand! James may have meant the “coming of the Lord was at hand” in the destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism when these “rich” men who were defrauding the poor laborers would be judged by the Lord. Read Josephus’ account of the destruction of Jerusalem and the whole land of Palestine by the Romans. Even Josephus interprets this holocaust as the judgment of God upon the Jews. Jesus predicted it 35 years before it took place (Matt. 24:1-35 and parallels in Mk. 13; Lk. 21). Jesus even characterized the destruction of Jerusalem as “the coming of the Son of man” (Matt. 24:27,30; 26:64). The writer of Hebrews (about A.D. 60) said Christians “could see the day approaching” when the Lord would come in judgment. Now the only “day” anyone could “see approaching” was the destruction of Jerusalem beginning in A.D. 66. Jesus gave specific signs by which those who believed him might anticipate that “day.” But as for Jesus’ second coming, no signs were given, and, in fact, Jesus said he would come back the 2nd time when no one expected him to come. So, forget all the past and present predictions of the “signs of the times” indicating his second coming----THERE WILL NOT BE ANY! In any case, James is not making a false prophecy.

James admonishes his “brethren” to take “as examples of suffering and patience” the prophets and Job (5:10-11). The word “patience” in the English language has a connotation of “fatalistic, unrepining serenity.” The two Greek words used in this text are makrothumias (“longsuffering”), and hupomonen (“endurance”). Both words mean “steadfastness.” Neither word expects the sufferer to remain silently passive under the suffering. Certainly, both the prophets (especially Jeremiah) and Job expressed their incomprehension of, and feelings about, their suffering to God. But the point James is

making, is that in spite of their verbalized questions and feelings about what they were suffering---THEY ENDURED, THEY NEVER LOST FAITH IN GOD, AND ACCEPTED GOD'S ANSWER, OR LACK OF ANSWERS ON THE BASIS OF WHAT THEY KNEW ABOUT GOD FROM HIS REVELATION IN HISTORY AND IN HIS WORD! They are held up as paragons of "endurance."

It would be the ideal situation if in the courts of America witnesses and jurors and defendants and plaintiffs would all, without exception, tell the truth, every time they're questioned. It would be ideal if everyone who signs a contract under which to work or sell or take out a loan to pay back would always tell the truth and keep his word. BUT WE DO NOT LIVE IN AN IDEAL WORLD! We live in a fallen, sinful world. Many people will not tell the truth unless they are placed under threat of punishment for perjury and lying and defaulting on contracts! Paul wrote to Timothy, "the law is not for the just but for the unjust" 1 Tim. 1:8. Those who are not Christian have to be made to tell the truth by coercion of civil law. This being the reality, it is not a sin for a Christian to take an oath in a court of law to tell the truth. It is not a sin for a Christian to sign a contract to work, or to pay back a loan. It is not a sin for Christians to "pledge allegiance" to the country of their birth. Those are not frivolous oaths. James, like Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, is forbidding frivolous, vain, empty, perjured oaths. If business in a court or a bank or with an employer can be done with both parties being absolutely trustworthy, then no oath would be required and would be vain. Back in the "good old days," some Christian people did business together on the basis of their word and an handshake. Now, are "them days are gone forever?" They shouldn't be! Read 1 Cor. 6:1-11 and tell me that Christians should not trust one another!

Sin has brought terminal death upon all flesh! Flesh and blood cannot go to heaven. It must all return to the dust from whence it came. God is not going to heal all sickness! Jesus didn't heal all the sick people around him when he was here! Even those he did heal shed their fleshly bodies through death sooner or later. One sickness or another is going to bring death to every single human being alive!---unless Jesus comes first. If he comes before our fleshly bodies die, we must still shed them one way or another for they cannot inherit heaven (1 Cor. 15:50). But it certainly is not wrong to pray for healing from any and every sickness! If God chooses through his mercy and providence to prolong a life for his purposes we should rejoice and assist that healed one to fulfill God's will in his/her life. If God chooses not to heal the sick who have been prayed for, we must not lose faith in God and Christ. We must take hope and joy from the revelation of the Holy Spirit through the words of the apostle Paul.... "to be with Christ is very far better" (Phil. 1:23) and, "...we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord..." (2 Cor. 5:8).

The first thing to notice here is that James is talking about "erring brethren" and not about the non-Christian. "If one among you wanders from the truth..." when he is brought back from the error of his way his soul will be saved and a multitude of his sins will be covered! Some who call themselves Christians believe that once a person is a Christian, that person, though he/she may sin, cannot sin to the point of damnation. They believe God guarantees his repentance before death. This flies in the face of other unequivocal

statements of Scripture that if a Christian continues willfully in apostasy he/she is “fallen from grace” and it is “impossible to renew them again unto repentance” (see Gal. 5:1-4; Heb. 6:1-6; 10:26; 1 Cor. 9:27). The “death” a “returned” Christian is saved from is the “second death” i.e., eternal separation from the presence of God. One who was once a Christian and has become an apostate (i.e., one who has renounced the efficacy of the vicarious death of Christ for his sins and his/her obligation to covenant relationship, whether taking up some other religion or making up his own religion of humanism, atheism, etc.) IS IN NEED OF “CONVERSION” AS DESPERATELY AS ANY UNBELIEVER! The Church has plenty of work to do preaching to those who have never heard, and preaching to those who have heard, believed, and fallen away!



### Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

### Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

