

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF JAMES – FAITH THAT WORKS -- NINE TESTS OF GENUINE FAITH

INTRODUCTION:

We are living in a culture of **Identity Politics**. People can identify in all sorts of different ways. You have biological men identifying as women and asserting their right to participate in women's sports. You have Socialists and Communists identifying as members of the Democratic Party. I want to identify as tall and thin. In this book James is concerned with those individuals who identify as Christians but lack **genuine faith**. He wants to expose their hypocrisy and encourage believers to live in a way consistent with their profession of faith.

James is called the “**Proverbs of the New Testament**.” James was obviously influenced by the Proverbs of the Old Testament, the exhortative Psalms and the Sermon on the Mount. James writes with terse, pointed exhortations that call his audience to obedience.

D. Edmond Hiebert: This epistle sternly insists upon Christian practice consistent with Christian belief, heaps scathing contempt upon all empty profession, and administers a stinging rebuke to the readers' worldliness. Its stress upon the gospel's ethical imperative makes the epistle as relevant today as when it was first written. The presence of this practical epistle in the New Testament canon is a magnificent monument to the moral sensitivity and concern of the Christian church.

OVERVIEW

Genuine faith will show itself in a transformed life of good works. These good works are not a substitute for justification by faith – they are the fruit of that justification. But apart from such evidence of a changed life, one's profession of faith must be viewed as dead and hypocritical. This is a very practical letter that teaches Christians how to apply the Word and Wisdom of God to everyday living. There is no theological ivory tower where one can hide and profess loyalty to Jesus. One must live in the real world with a real and dynamic faith that is visible through its works.

BIG IDEA

**IN THE PRACTICAL REALITIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE, GENUINE FAITH
EMBRACES FULLY THE WILL OF GOD**

James 2:17 “*Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.*”

Ken Boa: Talk Thru the New Testament:

James is an intensely practical manual on the outworking of true faith in everyday life. It explores Christian conduct from several perspectives and shifts abruptly from topic to topic. Faith perseveres under trials, resists temptation, responds to the Word, overcomes prejudice, produces good works, controls the tongue, manifests wisdom, submits to God rather than worldly pleasures, depends on God rather than wealth, and waits patiently for the return of the Lord. Biblical faith moves from assent to actions, from words to works.

BASIC OUTLINE

NINE TESTS OF GENUINE FAITH ... FAITH WITHOUT “X” IS DEAD

IN THE PRACTICAL REALITIES OF EVERYDAY LIFE, GENUINE FAITH EMBRACES FULLY THE WILL OF GOD

James is concerned with the effectiveness of our faith. As we examine our faith, there are two different possible threads of application:

- 1) If we fail the tests of faith that James has provided we need to examine ourselves to see if our heart has deceived us with a mere profession of faith without the reality of **genuine saving faith**.
- 2) But the major thread since James is writing to professing believers deals with the **growth of our faith into maturity**. We will all be challenged by the different areas which James chooses to highlight – we will find ourselves somewhere along the spectrum of faith for each topic. James wants to motivate believers to press on in their faith to maturity.

1:1 OPENING SALUTATION

“James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings.”

AUTHORSHIP:

Thomas Lea: The most likely candidate among the New Testament Jameses for authorship of this letter is the **Lord's brother (Mark 6:3; Acts 15:13)**. The letter contains several references showing possible influence by Jesus' words on the author (cf. **Jas. 4:11** and **Matt. 7:1–2**). The early church also accepted the Lord's half-brother as the author of the writing.

(Note how this refutes the Catholic notion of the perpetual virginity of Mary)

Look at the **transformation of James** – from a skeptical family member to now a loyal follower of Jesus and the respected leader of the church at Jerusalem and the author of scripture.

AUDIENCE:

It is evident that the writer was targeting **Christian Jews**.

- The meeting place of the congregation is described as a *synagogue* (**2:2**).
- The title “*Lord of Sabaoth*” is distinctly Jewish (**5:4**).
- The readers are addressed in **1:1** as “*the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad*” -- Probably a reference to the believers who fled Jerusalem during the persecution that followed after Stephen’s martyrdom recorded in **Acts 7-8**.

8:1 *And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*
- The readers are explicitly identified as Christians using the designation of “*brethren*” in **2:1; 5:7, 8**

R. Kent Hughes: When Jewish Christians were first persecuted in Jerusalem after the death of Stephen, they fled first to Judea and Samaria (**Acts 8:1**) and then to Jewish communities around the Mediterranean (**Acts 11:19, 20**). Tragically these Jewish Christians were not taken in by their expatriate Jewish kinsmen, but rather were rejected and persecuted.

Further, refused protection by the Jewish community, these Jewish Christians were exploited by the Gentiles. Homeless and disenfranchised, they were robbed of what possessions they had, hauled into court, and subjected to the Gentile elite. They had less standing than slaves. They became religious, social, and economic pariahs.

I. (1:2-18) FAITH WITHOUT PERSEVERANCE IS DEAD **PERSEVERANCE = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

“the testing of your faith produces endurance

- A. (:2-12) TRIALS TEST OUR FAITH WITH THE GOAL OF PERSEVERANCE
 - 1. (:2-4) TRIALS SHOULD BE VIEWED AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE OUTCOMES

The Greek word translated *trials*, *peirasmoi*, has the double sense of **outward trials**, and **inward temptations**. Outward trials very often become occasions of temptation to sin. James is going to address outward trials first and then transition to addressing inward temptations.

- a. Opportunity for Greater Joy –
"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials"
Trials are inevitable, but unpredictable – unexpected as to when and what
Trials are varied – as to their nature and severity
Not pretending that trials are pleasant – looking at their potential to build Christian character and endurance
- b. Opportunity for Greater Endurance
"knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance"
- c. Opportunity for Greater Maturity
"And let endurance have its perfect result,
that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing"

Craig Blomberg: In light of the full range of NT teaching, this “wholeness” is characterized by the absence of self-centeredness and division, the presence of the fruit of the Spirit, the ability to teach others, deeper insight into God’s will and ways, greater trustworthiness—in short, growing in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

- 2. (:5-8) TRIALS TEST OUR FAITH AS WE ASK GOD FOR WISDOM
Remember the theme of the book: Do we have **genuine faith**? Or dead faith?
Four facts about God encourage believers to ask God for Wisdom in the midst of trials:
What type of **GIVER** is God?

- a. God is an impartial Giver – *gives to all men*
- b. God is a generous Giver -- *generously*
- c. God is an accepting Giver – not finding fault or condemning – *without reproach*
- d. God is a faithful Giver – *and it will be given to him*

The one responsibility laid on believers is to *ask in faith without doubting* or without divided allegiance – we don't want to be **unstable** like the waves tossed about in the ocean or **double-minded**

3. (:9-12) PERSEVERANCE UNDER TRIAL BRINGS BLESSING FOR ETERNITY

This present life is transitory – so living for eternity makes trials bearable

a. The Test of Poverty

"But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position"

b. The Test of Prosperity

*"and let the rich man glory in his humiliation,
because like flowering grass he will pass away"*

The **blessing and reward** for passing this test of enduring trials is described as '*the crown of life*' vs. 12 – given the context – I don't think this is talking about some special reward that only some believers will receive – this crown consists of eternal life – a reference to both a quality of life and duration of life in fellowship with God

John 17:3 *"And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."*

We need to trust the kind providence of God that he is behind our trials and producing results that will benefit us – remember the words of **William Cowper**:

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

B. (:13-16) TEMPTATIONS CANNOT BE BLAMED ON GOD

James switches his focus from Trials sourced in our external circumstances to Temptations arising from sin within. These two can easily be related since our response to external Trials can unleash inner bitterness and rebellion that are problems of the heart.

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God.'"

Why is it wrong to blame God?

His Righteous and Holy Character set Him apart from temptation

"God cannot be tempted by evil"

He Himself does not tempt anyone."

Where does the blame lie? What is the Source of Temptation?

Look at the **anatomy of sin**

- 1) Combination of Desire and Deception – Gen. 3 – not believing God's Word; questioning the Goodness of God; sin can look very attractive
temptation is like the bait that attracts the fish – our own **internal lusts** are the problem – we don't take into account the consequences
 - a. Lust of flesh / Desire for Provision / Desire for Security
 - b. Lust of eyes / Desire for Pleasure / Desire for Satisfaction
 - c. Pride of life / Desire for Purpose / Desire for Significance
- 2) Disobedience – we act on our evil desires; make bad choices
- 3) Death – not just physical death but spiritual death – this is why we need a Savior

Vs. 16 – *Do not be Deceived* – don't start down this tragic pathway

Remember **God's harvest principle**: "*As we sow, so shall we also reap.*"

C. (:17-18) THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD BLESSES US FROM START TO FINISH

Rather than God being the source of tempting us to evil, He must be recognized as the giver of every good gift and the one who has sovereignly granted us spiritual life.

1. (:17) THE BLESSING OF **GENERAL GRACE**: EVERY GOOD GIFT COMES FROM GOD (WHO IS GOOD AND IMMUTABLE)

All of God's gifts have as their end the accomplishment of God's purpose in our lives, and that is spiritual maturity – making us more like Christ.

2. (:18) THE BLESSING OF **SAVING GRACE**: REGENERATION (SPIRITUAL LIFE) COMES FROM THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD (WHO IS GOOD AND POWERFUL)

John MacArthur: In **1:18**, James answers four questions about **regeneration**, the new birth, that shed light on the proof that God is not responsible for our temptations or for the sins that result from succumbing to them. Rather, He is responsible for our righteousness.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| - WHO DOES IT? | <i>"in the exercise of His will"</i> |
| - WHAT IS IT? | <i>"He brought us forth"</i> |
| - HOW DOES IT HAPPEN? | <i>"by the word of truth"</i> |
| - WHY IS IT DONE? | <i>"so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures"</i> |

SECOND TEST

II. (1:19-27) FAITH WITHOUT OBEDIENCE IS DEAD **OBEDIENCE = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

"prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers"

A. (:19-21) OBEDIENCE REQUIRES A RECEPTIVE HEART

1. An **Attentive** heart is a receptive heart – make calm listening a priority

Be quick to hear

Slow to speak

Slow to anger

2. A **Clean** heart is a receptive heart – put aside sinful distractions

Therefore putting aside all filthiness

and all that remains of wickedness

Spiros Zodhiates: Sin in our lives is like having wax in our ears; it prevents the Word of truth from reaching our hearts; for if it cannot penetrate through the ear, it will not come down to the heart.

3. A **Humble** heart is a receptive heart

in humility receive the word implanted which is able to save your souls

cf. the **Parable of the Sower** (Matt. 13:1-9); only one type of soil bears any fruit; requires a receptive heart

cf. football analogy of a receiver: what causes dropped passes?

- not looking the ball into the hands
- taking eyes off the ball; looking at circumstances around me
- getting distracted
- running the wrong route; not prepared to receive the ball
- requires good hands

B. (:22) OBEDIENCE REQUIRES PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRUTHS OF GOD'S WORD

But prove yourselves doers of the word

and not merely hearers who delude themselves

For those of us who are privileged to sit under godly teaching and preaching – this is a strong exhortation – we need to constantly be reminded of the danger of just acquiring knowledge which puffs up rather than applying the truths of God's Word which produce love and spiritual maturity.

Illustration: Seminary speaker in chapel – topic was evangelism – built up the suspense – promised to reveal to us the secret to successful evangelism ...

After great anticipation ... his punchline was the simple Nike motto – **Just Do It**

That was Pastor Harmon's exhortation to us on Wed. night – Focus on Outreach – not studying it but **Doing it**

C. (:23-25) CONTRAST BETWEEN A FORGETFUL HEARER AND AN EFFECTUAL DOER – Illustration of looking into a mirror

1. (:23-24) FORGETFUL HEARER

2. (:25) EFFECTUAL DOER

The purpose of Scripture is not simply to inform us. It is to transform us.

D. (:26-27) PRACTICAL EVIDENCES OF OBEDIENCE

1. (:26) NEGATIVE EXAMPLE: CONTROLLING OUR TONGUE

To bridle the tongue is to discipline it, restrain it, curb it, keep it under control. The imagery suggests that the tongue is like an unruly horse that needs bit and bridle to check its wild tendencies. But you also need to speak a gracious and helpful word at the appropriate time.

David Platt: I believe there is a word of application here for us. In a day of text-messaging, e-mail, cell phones, Twitter, blogs, Facebook, etc., we need to be careful. We've created an entire culture that says if you have a thought, then you should immediately share it with the rest of the world. But follower of Christ, don't buy that line of thinking. Keep a tight rein on your tongue, and speak in a way that shows your faith is real and the core of your heart belongs to God.

Use a "pause principle." Before speaking or posting, ask:

Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it loving? Is it wise? Is it helpful?

2. (:27) POSITIVE EXAMPLE: SOCIAL CONCERN AND MORAL PURITY

Sacrificial care for the most needy and most vulnerable; we are to help the helpless.

At the same time we must guard the moral purity of our own character.

III. (2:1-13) FAITH WITHOUT IMPARTIAL LOVE IS DEAD

IMPARTIAL LOVE = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH

A. (:1) CONVICTING COMMAND = DON'T SHOW PARTIALITY

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.

The bible has a lot to say about discrimination, about prejudice – whether racism or sexism or favoritism based on your wealth or social standing. God is especially on the side of the poor and against exploitation by the rich. Your faith cannot be just some type of intellectual persuasion. It must evidence itself in righteous relationships. That is how it will be demonstrated that your faith is genuine.

If we truly see how glorious our Lord Jesus is, we will understand that all humankind stands on a level playing field at the foot of the cross. We should not be overly impressed by anyone or despise anyone created in the image of God or treat them with contempt or lack of respect.

B. (:2-3) CASE STUDY CONTRAST – FAVORITISM AND PREJUDICE

We have a bad tendency to pigeon-hole people based on their external appearance and their social and economic standing. Here the situation in the assembly is who is going to be granted prime seating vs. who will be forced to stand on the perimeter or sit on the floor.

C. (:4) CONTEMPTIBLE CONDEMNATION – FOLLY OF SOWING PARTIALITY

In secular courts, too often corrupt judges accepted bribes or were at least unduly influenced by the perceived value of the individuals involved. Thus they were *judges with evil motives*. God remains impartial and without prejudice in His judgments.

D. (:5-11) CORRECTING CONFUSED THINKING

You are short-sighted if you cannot see that it is the rich that more often are the oppressors and the ones exploiting others. James points his audience back to the royal law in **vs. 8** – the scriptural command to *love your neighbor as yourself*.

John MacArthur: **Royal** carries the ideas of **supreme** and **sovereign**, indicating the absolute and binding authority of the law. When a sovereign king gives an edict, it is incontestably binding on all his subjects. There is no court of appeal or arbitration. According to the Scripture indicates that God's sovereign, royal law and His biblical commands are synonymous. What James calls *the royal law* is, in essence, the sum and substance of the complete Word of God, summarized in **Matthew 22:37–40** as perfectly loving God and loving one's neighbor. Paul says, "Love is the fulfillment of the law" (**Rom. 13:10**). When one loves God with perfect devotion, he does not break any of His commands. When one loves his neighbor perfectly, he never violates another person. Thus perfect love keeps all the commands, thereby fulfilling the whole law.

E. (:12-13) CONCLUDING CAUTION AGAINST A JUDGMENTAL SPIRIT TOWARDS OTHERS

Fundamental Principle Regarding the Relationship between Mercy and Judgment

"mercy triumphs over judgment" – Mercy should matter the most

Why should Christians reject Prejudice and Partiality?

- Because it is against the nature of God – who judges impartially
- Because it goes against God's pattern of choosing the poor and the weak to be spiritually rich and to showcase his glory and power
- Because if you sin in this area, you have broken the royal law and essentially condemned yourself as a total lawbreaker
- Because ultimately you want God to show mercy to you

IV. (2:14-26) FAITH WITHOUT GOOD WORKS IS DEAD **GOOD WORKS = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

"faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself"

Those who claim to be believers but offer not the slightest practical assistance to their fellow Christians experiencing obvious needs, when they have the resources to help, demonstrate the emptiness of their profession. True saving faith will by nature produce good works, as illustrated by examples as diverse as **Abraham** and **Rahab**.

A. (:14) FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION = THEME OF THE BOOK – WHAT USE IS FAITH ALONE?

Douglas Moo: James does not in any way question the vital and central importance of faith. We miss James' point in this paragraph if we do not understand this. James does not dispute the power of faith to justify or to save. What he is concerned to do is to **define the true nature of faith**. As he does throughout his letter, James attacks superficial and inconsistent Christians who claim they have faith but fail to act on the basis of their faith. Such a 'faith', James says, amounts to no more than a verbal profession – such as the confession that '*God is one*' (v. 19). A 'faith' that is apart from '*deeds*', or '*works*' (vv. 20, 26), is dead (vv. 17 and 26) and '*useless*' (v. 20). It does not have the power to save (v. 14) or to justify (v. 24). True biblical faith issues in '*deeds*' (vv. 14, 17); it works along with active obedience and is '*completed by*' works (v. 22). It is the kind of faith exhibited by both the revered '*father*' of faith, Abraham (vv. 21–23), and Rahab, the immoral outcast (v. 25). It is absolutely vital to understand that the main point of this argument, expressed three times (in vv. 17, 20 and 26), is not that works are a kind of second, unrelated, addition to faith but that **genuine faith naturally produces works**. That is its very nature.

B. (:15-17) SIMPLE ILLUSTRATION = HELPING A NEEDY BROTHER – FAITH ALONE NEVER FED ANYONE / FAITH ALONE IS WORTHLESS
Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

C (:18-20) SHOW AND TELL – FAITH ALONE DOES NOT DIFFERENTIATE YOU FROM DEMONS / FAITH ALONE IS WORTHLESS

1. **V. 18** Faith and works are inseparable – if you try to show me faith that has no accompanying works, your faith is invalid
2. **V. 19** – Faith must be more than mere intellectual assent of true doctrine – look at what the demons acknowledge to be true; even an emotional response is not sufficient – the demons *shudder*
Genuine faith must include willful obedience that applies the Word of God and produces evident fruit in the life

D. (:21-26) TWO OT PROOF CASES – WORKS VINDICATE THE REALITY OF OUR FAITH / FAITH ALONE IS WORTHLESS

Case of Abraham and Case of Rahab

Vs. 2:24 – *You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.*

Martin Luther became confused over the book of **James** and specifically this passage where James says that *a man is justified by works*. He began to doubt whether the book of James should even be in the accepted canon of scripture. In fact, he called the book of James an **epistle of straw**. That is, it didn't have a lot of **substance** to it. You have to remember that what Luther was fighting against at that time was the whole Catholic system that taught that faith is necessary for salvation, but it's not sufficient for salvation. You need to have faith, but you need to have works along with faith. Faith plus works brings salvation. And of course, this system was actually called **sacerdotalism**. I know that's a big word, but it comes from the word *sacer* meaning priests, which basically means that salvation is accomplished not just by faith, but through the church and the ministrations of the priesthood in the church. And so it wasn't a matter of just simply putting your faith in Christ.

So is James here contradicting the clear teaching of the Apostle Paul in Romans and Galatians that a man is justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ? Absolutely not. Paul is talking about justification in a legal sense in the eyes of God while James is talking about justification before men who are observing the lifestyle of professing believers.

Paul emphasizes the **root of salvation**: We are saved by grace through faith.

James emphasizes the **fruit of salvation**: Genuine faith produces a changed life.

Illustration: You don't make an apple tree alive by attaching apples to its branches. The apples appear because the tree is alive. Apples do not create the tree; they reveal its nature. Likewise, good works do not create salvation, but they reveal the reality of living faith.

V. (3:1-18) FAITH WITHOUT SELF CONTROL OF THE TONGUE AND GODLY WISDOM IS DEAD

PRACTICAL WISDOM = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH

“Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.”

A. (:1-12) FAITH WITHOUT SELF CONTROL OF THE TONGUE IS DEAD

1. (:1-2) Consider the greater responsibility and accountability of teachers
2. (:3-4) 2 Illustrations to prove the importance of self control of the tongue
Powerful horses and Large ships
The tongue seems like a small member, but it has a large influence
3. (:5-8) The small tongue can cause big-time trouble
Once toothpaste comes out of the tube, you can't put it back.
4. (:9-12) Using the tongue for both blessing and cursing is a contradiction by definition

B. (:13-18) FAITH WITHOUT GODLY WISDOM IS DEAD

1. (:13-14) Any claim to practical wisdom must be vindicated by the genuineness of its fruit

Daniel Doriani: What James calls “*the wisdom that comes from heaven*” drives the excellent life. The wise demonstrate God’s wisdom daily. They inspire others by giving them a living model of **righteousness** that incarnates the will of God. Their lives become models of righteousness. They become our heroes in the faith as they reflect the character of Christ. . . The Bible says **gentle people** live a certain way: They are patient. They make peace. They are slow to take offense. They are long-suffering. They do not demand their way. Peace follows them wherever they go.

2. (:15-18) The root of wisdom will produce corresponding fruit

Douglas Moo: The wisdom that does not produce a good lifestyle (v. 13) is, in sum, characterized by “*the world, the flesh and the devil*”. In each of these ways, it is the direct antithesis of “*the wisdom that comes from above*” – heavenly in nature, spiritual in essence and divine in origin.

VI. (4:1-10) FAITH WITHOUT INTIMACY WITH GOD IS DEAD **INTIMACY WITH GOD = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

David Platt: Two Pictures of Friendship

A. Friendship with the world (4:1-5)

1. comes from the sinful desires of the flesh,
2. is motivated by a longing for earthly pleasure,
3. and results in spiritual adultery against God.

B. Friendship with God (4:6-10)

1. comes from the gracious desire of God,
2. is motivated by a longing for eternal satisfaction,
3. and results in submission to the authority of God.

A. (:1-2) RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS CAN BE TRACED BACK TO WORLDLINESS

B. (:3-6) FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD = HOSTILITY TOWARDS GOD
(THE TUG OF WAR BETWEEN FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD AND FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD)

C. (:7-10) INTIMACY WITH GOD = THE CURE FOR WORLDLINESS

6 STEPS TOWARDS RENEWED INTIMACY WITH GOD **(THE PATHWAY TO TRUE INTIMACY WITH GOD)**

No "self-help" program here; this is a "God-help me" program.

1. Submit to God

"Submit therefore to God."

2. Resist the Devil

"Resist the devil"

Result: *"and he will flee from you"*

3. Draw Near to God

"Draw near to God"

Result: *"and He will draw near to you."*

4. Cleanse Yourself

a. Outward Purity

"Cleanse your hands, you sinners;"

b. Inward Purity

"and purify your hearts, you doubleminded."

5. Grieve over Your Sin

"Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom."

6. Humble Yourself

"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord"

Result: *"and He will exalt you"* – God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble

VII. (4:11-17) FAITH WITHOUT SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD IS DEAD SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH

"if the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that"

A lot of times Christians try to play God without even realizing the folly of what they are doing. Don't live your life as if you are the one in total control. Always be aware of God's sovereignty and His pursuit of His kingdom agenda. We must trust God for tomorrow.

A. (:11-12) DON'T USURP GOD'S ROLE AS JUDGE

Example = slandering your Christian brother

Remember your role is to obey the law, not sit in judgment of it

(:12) Exclusivity of God's Role as Lawgiver and Judge

"There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?"

B. (:13-17) DON'T USURP GOD'S ROLE AS MASTER PLANNER

1. (:13-14) Presumption Regarding Our Future Represents a Failure to Submit to the Sovereign Will of God
2. (:15) Submission to the Will of God is the Proper Perspective towards the Future
3. (:16) Presumption Represents Arrogant Boasting
4. (:17) Failure to Obey the Truth Is Always Sin

VIII. (5:1-12) FAITH WITHOUT THE FEAR OF GOD'S JUDGMENT IS DEAD THE FEAR OF GOD'S JUDGMENT = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH

"behold, the Judge is standing right at the door"

FAITH THAT PATIENTLY PERSEVERES AVOIDS THREE DANGERS BY THE PROPER FEAR OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

Craig Blomberg: Christians should respond to oppression not by usurping God's role as avenger, nor by making unrealistic promises to their oppressors, but with a **persevering and prophetic patience**. Only God can fully and fairly right all wrongs, and he has promised to do so at the *Parousia*.

A. (:1-6) THE DANGER OF FILTHY RICHES

v. 1 Summary -- *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.* Payback time for those who had gained wealth in unethical ways and then had used that money in selfish ways. Stresses the certainty of judgment.

v. 2-3 -- Riches don't last

vs. 3b -- Your hoarding of wealth will come back to haunt you

vs. 4 -- Your exploitation has not gone unnoticed

Warren Wiersbe: Note the **witnesses** that God will call on that **day of judgment**.

- 1) The rich men's *wealth* will witness against them (5:3).
- 2) The *wages* they held back will also witness against them in court (5:4a).
- 3) The *workers* will also testify against them (5:4).

vs. 5 – Your Hedonism has set you up for stricter judgment

vs. 6 – Your bully tactics will now be avenged

B. (:7-11) THE DANGER OF FAILING TO EXERCISE PATIENCE IN WAITING FOR CHRIST TO RETURN

Since Christ is coming back to right wrongs and exercise judgment (and maybe soon):

- don't give up.
- don't compromise.
- don't retaliate.
- don't become bitter.
- don't abandon your faith.

vs. 9 – *Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.*

C. (:12) THE DANGER OF SWEARING AN OATH

How does this section fit into the narrative?

Daniel Doriani: Some commentators see it as a genuine transition to James's final section. The phrase, "*above all*" in **James 5:12** is a literary convention meant to **introduce final remarks**. The topic, once again, is **speech** and the need to use the tongue to build community solidarity. **Plain honesty** is the first necessity (5:12), followed by prayer, confession of sin, and efforts to win straying brothers (5:13–20).

let your yes be yes, and your no, no;

Simple honest, reliable speech is better than complicated oaths that invoke some higher power – like "on my mother's grave" or "as God is my witness."

IX. (5:13-18) FAITH WITHOUT FERVENT EFFECTUAL PRAYER IS DEAD **FERVENT, EFFECTUAL PRAYER = THE TEST OF GENUINE FAITH**

"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

A. (:13-16) DEALING WITH RESTORING WEARY AND WEAK PERSECUTED BELIEVERS

Is this section dealing with physical sickness or with spiritual weakness?

John MacArthur: As the context and the content of this section make clear, the subject is not physical illness or healing. Instead, its concern is with **healing spiritual weakness**, spiritual weariness, spiritual exhaustion, and spiritual depression through prayer, as well as dealing with the suffering and sin that accompanies it. To insert a discussion here on physical healing would be incongruous. Nothing in the preceding or following context

would prepare James's readers for that. But a section on how to help the casualties of persecution through prayer fits perfectly into the flow of James's thought. Specifically, James discusses the relationship of prayer to comfort, restoration, fellowship, and power. The suffering James has in view is evil treatment, not physical illness.

B. (:17-18) EXAMPLE OF EFFECTUAL PRAYER OF ELIJAH

(5:19-20) DEALING WITH RESCUING THOSE THAT STRAY FROM THE TRUTH

The whole book has been dealing with tests of genuine faith. How should we pursue and seek to rescue those who seem to be departing from the truth?

A. (:19) ENCOURAGEMENT THAT THOSE WHO STRAY CAN BE RESCUED

B. (:20) ENCOURAGEMENT THAT THE BENEFITS OF SAVING THE PERISHING ARE ENORMOUS

CONCLUSION:

Get out your red marking pens. It is time to grade yourself with respect to these 9 tests we have been examining in the book of James. How do you measure up? Is your faith genuine?

1. Perseverance – How do I respond to tough situations?
2. Obedience – How do I respond to God's Word?
3. Impartial Love – How do I respond to God's people?
4. Good Works – How do I implement my faith in practical ways?
5. Practical Wisdom – How do I demonstrate heavenly wisdom?
6. Intimacy with God – How do I draw close to God?
7. Submission to the Will of God – How do I trust God for tomorrow?
8. The Fear of God's Judgment – How do I trust in God's future vindication?
9. Fervent, Effectual Prayer – How do I petition God and intercede for others?

James can be remembered through five questions:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. How do I respond to TRIALS? | Perseverance |
| 2. How do I respond to TRUTH? | Obedience |
| 3. How do I treat PEOPLE? | Love |
| 4. How do I use my TONGUE? | Wisdom and Self Control |
| 5. How do I respond to TOMORROW? | Patience and Faith |

WHY STUDY THIS BOOK?

- To warn against hypocrisy and provide an objective basis to test the validity of one's profession of faith
- To emphasize practical application of the Word and Wisdom of God rather than mere head knowledge
- To learn how to face trials in the Christian life and how to seek wisdom from God
- To encourage perseverance in the face of difficulties
- To fight against prejudice and social injustice.
- To fully submit to the will of God
- To develop an effective prayer life