**Everyday Christianity**

*A Study of James*

Guy Woods wrote, “It is a wonderful demonstration of the fact that the principles of Christ, properly applied and fully assimilated, will adequately meet the needs of every generation, whatever the period in history may be.”

**Parallels between Jesus and James**

1. Rejoice in trials – Matthew 5:10-12; James 1:2.
2. Christians are to be “perfect” – Matthew 5:48; James 1:4; 3:2.
3. Emphasis on the poor – Luke 6:20; James 2:5.
4. Ask and receive – Matthew 7:8; James 1:5.
5. No doubting – Matthew 21:21-22; James 1:7-8.
6. God is the source of good – Matthew 7:11; James 1:17.
7. Emphasize obedience – Luke 6:46; James 1:22-25.
8. Peacemakers – Matthew 5:9; James 3:17-18.
9. Emphasize humility – Matthew 23:12; James 4:10.
10. Warnings to the rich – Matthew 6:20; James 5:1-3.

**James 1**

1. 1:1-4 – Joy in trials.
   1. “12 tribes” is not a reference to literal, fleshly Jews, but to God’s people, the church.
   2. We know this because “in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek” (Gal. 3:26).
   3. Galatians 6:16
   4. The early Christians had been scattered because of persecution while the apostles remained in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-4).
   5. Notice they “fell” into various trials (v. 2). This would be a reference to trials from an external force. Same word is used in Luke 10:30.
   6. “Trials” (v. 2) is from a word that signifies being put through a test (1 Pet. 4:12-16).
   7. “Testing” (v. 3) is from a word that means proving or trying (1 Pet. 1:7). This testing would produce (*hupo – under and mone – to remain*) endurance. The Christian is to “bear up under” the trials of life.
   8. So, why are we to count it all joy? 2 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Peter 2:20-23
   9. We can be perfect (from *telos* meaning, “end, completion”) and entire (from *holokleros* meaning “having all the parts”). *“This emphasizes the fact that the most advanced children of God may not relax their efforts, but must ever remember that they are engaged in a race which is won only when the entire distance is covered…the severe discipline of life does indeed, when properly used, prepare us for continued progress in Christian attainment.”*
2. 1:5-8 – Ask God in faith.
   1. Verse 5 may be anticipating the question “How can I rejoice in trials?”
   2. The wisdom required to joyfully endure the trials of life can only be understood from God’s perspective. We need to see things the way in which God sees things.
   3. God is not a reluctant or grudging giver as we sometimes are. There is no such thing as an unanswered prayer for the child of God.
   4. “Faith” (v. 6) is much more than just a belief in something or someone. It is a trust, confidence, or firm reliance on the one to whom we are praying.
   5. In verse 6, James uses a word picture to show the nature of a man who does not rely on God. *”One torn by such inner conflict can never lean with confidence on God and His gracious promises.”*
   6. This man is “unstable” or unsettled. Faith in God requires our absolute devotion.
3. 1:9-11 – The Rich and the Poor.
   1. This is not the only time James discusses this issue and so obviously there were some problems between these two groups in the early church.
   2. “Lowly” is a reference to one’s social position. Christianity is such that is meets every need of every man. It matters not what your position in life is. Christianity does for the poor man what the world cannot and will not do.
   3. The rich man can be humbled. The world considers a loss of wealth to be a tragedy, but not the Christian. Riches are described as deceitful (Matt. 13:22) and uncertain (1 Tim. 6:17). Money cannot save your soul or make you happy.
   4. Proverbs 30:7-9

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1. 1:12-19 – Temptation, Sin, and our Reaction.
   1. Most commentators agree that verse 12 is connected with the thoughts of verses 2-4. *Temptations* is the same Greek word used in verse 2 which is there *trials*. The only way we can win the crown (*stephanos*) is through endurance. In classical Greek this crown was not royal, but of victory in the games.
   2. Verses 13-16 deal specifically with trials that come from within as opposed to those that come from an external source.
      1. JJ Turner wrote the following in his commentary on James: *“It is a human weakness it seems, to blame others for our mistakes, problems, sins, etc. The following illustrates some ways men excuse their sins: by placing the blame on another person; by pleading ignorance; by blaming their background; by attributing their action to their environment; by blaming their inheritance (parents); by blaming their circumstances; by crying, “the devil made me do it;” by claiming it was only a “mistake” or “accident;” by claiming they could not help it; by saying, “Oh well, others are doing it, too.”*
      2. The Holy Spirit here reveals the origin of sin in our personal lives: our own desires (v. 14). With this being the case, we realize that we are not all tempted in the same way or with the same things.
      3. There is no evil or sin that can induce God to do what is wrong (Hab. 1:12-13). Our goal, then, is to live and think in such a way as to rise above the appeal of sin.
      4. *Lust* is from a word (*epithumia*) that means, “a great desire or strong longing.” Verse 15 shows the progress of the strong desires people may have.
      5. Verse 16 reminds us not to be fooled about the origin of our own personal sin.
   3. Verses 17-20 tell us that God is the source of nothing but the good in our lives.
      1. Three things are pointed out about God in verse 17: (1) He gives only good and perfect gifts, (2) He gives them continually, and (3) He never changes.
      2. God saves us through His word (v. 18). He does not lead us into sin through temptation. I believe verse 18 is the basis for verses 19-20.
      3. A person who is always talking doesn’t take much time to listen! We should be eager to hear what God has to say to us instead of talking over Him.
      4. Ecclesiastes 5:2.
      5. Losing one’s temper never leads to anything good. It will not help us in doing righteousness (the right thing).
   4. Verses 21-25 instruct us on how to receive the word of God.
      1. *Put away* implies personal responsibility. Sin originates in the heart and we are not to have filthy, wicked hearts. After the putting away there must be something put in its place – the word of God.
      2. In this passage James emphasizes the *doing* of God’s will. The word translated *doer* is from a word that means, “performer.” We are to be acting out God’s word in our lives.
      3. James states that we need to be looking at ourselves in God’s mirror, seeing things from His perspective. We will be blessed when we do this.
   5. Verses 26-27 address true religion.
      1. Three aspects are addressed here: (1) proper control (2) proper concern and (3) proper conduct.
      2. One person wrote, *“According to James, true religion is not merely ceremonial formality, but acts of mercy, love, and holiness.”*
      3. Psalm 41:1; Proverbs 19:17; Micah 6:8; Acts 20:35

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1. 2:1-13 – The Sin of Partiality.
   1. A person cannot have “the faith” of Christ and be one who shows personal favoritism.
   2. Deuteronomy 1:16-18.
   3. This favoritism comes by looking at the outward appearance and is superficial. When a person dies to the old man, any prejudice must die right along with it.
   4. The specifics of their partiality are dealt with in verses 2-4. Sadly, this type of mindset still exists in the church today.
   5. This man that came into their assembly was literally, “gold-fingered.” The thought is perhaps that he/she had a ring on every finger. The poor man is a beggar or one who was dependent upon another for his survival.
   6. Our faith is being tested by this circumstance. Whose hand are we going to shake? Who will we invite to sit beside us?
   7. The Christians were dishonoring their name by showing favoritism (v. 5-7).
   8. Three things are pointed out about the poor man:
      1. Chosen by God – from *eklegomai* meaning, “to pick out for oneself.”
      2. Rich in faith – through his poor economic condition he is caused to realize his dependence upon God to a greater degree.
      3. Heirs of the kingdom – when a poor (or rich) person obeys the gospel they are born into the family of God and thus become heirs of His goodness.
   9. *Dishonored* is from a word that means, “to insult, treat with contempt.” Proverbs 14:21.
   10. James also points out that the rich were:
       1. Oppressing the Christians.
       2. Dragging them into court.
       3. Defiling the Christian name.
   11. 2:8-13 – Christians should be fulfilling the “royal law.”
   12. James again puts it very clear: If you are partial you commit sin (v. 9).
   13. You could do everything else right, but, if you are prejudiced, you are living in sin (v. 10).
2. JJ Turner wrote, “The Christian must always remember that he, too, will be judged. His judgment will be based upon the law of liberty. Therefore, he needs to act in harmony with the standard that he shall be judged by, remembering that both speech and deeds will be judged by the law of love.”
3. Respect of persons is wrong because:
   1. It is inconsistent with the gospel of Christ.
   2. It stems from evil thinking.
   3. It dishonors a person created in God’s image.
   4. It violates the law of love.
   5. It is the withholding of mercy.
   6. It causes one to be a hypocrite.

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1. 2:14-26 – Salvation Is By Faith, But Not By Faith Alone.
2. 2:14-17 – Profession vs. Practice.
   1. So many Bible verses speak to our doing good works that this is a very elementary discussion. However, because so many believe that one is saved at the point of faith, and by faith alone, this is a necessary topic. Remember, James is writing to Christians, not non-Christians.
   2. The tense of the Greek in verse 14 is that this person keeps on saying and keeps on not doing. The only way faith can be proven is by action.
3. 2:18-19 – Salvation is not a matter of one or the other, but of both (faith & works). Faith, according to the Bible, is always demonstrated by actions (Hebrews 11).
4. 2:20-26 - Abraham and Rahab Serve As Examples of Obedient Faith.
   1. Abraham was saved by His obedient faith – Genesis 22. Hebrews 11:17-19 also states that he was saved by faith.
   2. By using Rahab, a Canaanite harlot, James is going outside the Abrahamic family to show that active faith has no bounds. Hebrews 11:31 records Rahab’s faith. Joshua 2 and 6:22-25 is the actual account.

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James 3:1-12 – Controlling the Tongue.

1. Teachers are addressed first (v. 1-2). Not all Christians are qualified to teach.   
   JJ Turner wrote the following about teachers:

*“The teacher is expected to be more mature than the pupil. The teacher is a leader (Matt. 15:14). The teacher must be well prepared (2 Tim. 2:15). The teacher must be faithful (2 Tim. 2:2). The teacher is an instructor, inspirer, and guide. The teacher works with souls, fashioning them for eternity. The teacher is very influential. The teacher is to teach the whole counsel of God. The teacher knows how important each word is: he is careful of his speech.”*

1. What is being condemned by James is a man who appoints himself as a teacher in a selfish way. There is great responsibility and accountability involved in teaching God’s word to a group of people – 1 Timothy 4:16; Romans 2:21.
2. The Christian (especially the teacher) must be on constant guard against *stumbling*. The word means, “to fall, to fail in duty, to offend.”
3. James next illustrates controlling the tongue with three examples:
   1. The horse and bridle (v. 3). The largest horse recorded was a Shire named Mammoth. He was 21.2 ½ hands high and weighed 3,360 lbs.
   2. A ship and rudder (v. 4). The largest ship was the Seawise Giant in operation from 1979-2009. It was 1,504 ft long and had a dry weight tonnage of 564,650.
   3. A small fire can destroy a large portion of land if it gets out of control.
4. In the same way that little instruments can control very large and powerful objects, so our little tongues can do a lot of damage.
5. On verses 6-8 one man wrote, *“If a man’s religion gives him no control over his tongue, so that his words will edify and not corrupt (Eph. 4:29), then his religion is useless, for it has failed at a most crucial point. Ill-chosen, indiscreet, idle, malicious words separate friends, break up homes, start wars, and divide congregations.”*
6. Verses 9-12 present a contradiction in the tongue.
   1. The way we talk about our fellow man (cursing him) and our God (blessing Him) will show what kind of person we are.
   2. If a person will talk to you about someone else, they will talk to someone else about you!
7. Verses 13-18 present a contrast between the demon-like and the heavenly minded person.

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James 4:1-10 – The Source of Trouble among Christians.

1. Our battle should be with evil and sin, not one another – Ephesians 6:10-13.
2. These brethren were already being persecuted by outside sources so why would they want to fight among themselves? Verse 2 is written to state that they were constantly doing these things to one another.
3. The attitudes presented here are in direct opposition to the ones presented in 3:17-18.
4. The problems in the church are here connected to pleasure (v. 1), lust (v. 2), pleasures (v. 3), and friendship with the world (v. 4).
5. On verse three on man wrote, *“It appears as though they were asking God to bless them in their sinful practices and the attaining of their lustful goals. This is hard to imagine but it shows the power of a lust dominated life void of spiritual interests.”*
6. The Christian is married to Christ (Rom. 7:4) and can be guilty of spiritual adultery by trying to live like the world (v. 4).
7. God resists those who place themselves above others (v. 6).
8. The NT is full of teaching on humility. Perhaps the best example is found in Luke 18:9-14.
9. The solution to pride is to draw closer and submit to God (v. 7-8). We must be able to chew gum and walk at the same time. Resist the devil and draw near to God. How?
   1. Prayer.
   2. Bible study.
   3. Worship faithfully.
   4. Fellowship with like-minded people.
10. Verses 8-10 are a call for the divided, warring Christians to repent of their sin. It seems that a large group of people were in need of repentance.
    1. Clean hands is symbolic a living a holy life – 1 Timothy 2:8.
    2. Verse 9 indicates that true repentance should be visible.

James 4:11-12 – God is the final judge, not you.

1. True humility and repentance will cause one to turn away from speaking evil of others.
2. Arrogance places one above then law and causes them to look down on others. We must remember that God is the Judge of our souls.

James 4:13-17 – Tomorrow is uncertain.

1. Secularism is a major problem in our society and it can obviously become a problem with Christians.
2. Experience teaches us that life is uncertain at best. We truly do not know what will happen tomorrow. Based on this fact we must live our lives in the realm of God’s revealed will. To leave God out of our daily plans is sinful.
3. On verse 17 JJ Turner wrote, *“This person is a Christian and, above all people, should know that he should consider God’s will in his planning. By doing so he is a doer of good. By not doing so he is guilty of sin.”*

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Chapter 5 – Several Issues are addressed in this Chapter:

1. Corrupted riches – 5:1-6.
2. The Christian’s need of endurance – 5:7-12.
3. Confession and prayer – 5:13-18.
4. Restoring the erring – 5:19-20.

5:1-6 – The wealthy were guilty of living in pleasure.

1. Wealth, by itself, is never condemned in Scripture. Abraham, Job, and Peter were wealthy individuals, and righteous.
2. The condemnation that takes place here is of their hoarding of wealth. Perhaps this is a direct connection to 4:13-17. Also mentioned in verse 4 is the fact that the wealthy were exploiting those who worked for them. The old law condemned this kind of treatment – Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:14-15.
3. God knew what was taking place because He is the Lord of *Sabaoth* (Hosts, implies that God is omnipotent). Christians should be honest people!

5:7-12 – Christians need to endure – 5:7-12.

1. *Patient* is from a word that means, “to be of a long spirit, not lose heart.”
2. Patience, endurance is illustrated with three examples:
   1. The farmer – 5:7-8.
   2. The prophets – 5:10.
   3. Job – 5:11.
3. Also addressed is grumbling against one another (5:9). The Bible is very clear on what we need to do if problems arise between brethren (Matt. 5:21-26; 18:15-17).
4. 5:12 deals with the making of oaths. The Bible says a lot on this subject:
   1. Deuteronomy 6:13; 23:21.
   2. Leviticus 10:12.
   3. Matthew 26:62-64.
5. The Christian should be a person of his word. It should not be necessary for a child of God to swear by an object that he will/will not do something.
6. Matthew 12:33-37.

5:13-18 – Confession and prayer.

1. In suffering, go to God in prayer (v. 13). In good times, praise God (v. 13). In sickness (*astheneo* – weakness) call for the elders and pray (v. 14). Why anoint with oil?
   1. Ceremonial uses – 1 Samuel 16:13.
   2. Medicinal – Luke 10:34.
2. The text does not reveal in what way James is using this terminology. We do not the saving agent – prayer of faith (v. 15).
3. One thing that is certain is verse 16 – we are to confess (*to speak out*) our faults (*wrongdoing*) to one another and pray for one another.
4. Elijah is used as an example of the effectiveness of prayer – 1 Kings 17-18. The teaching in James on prayer and faith are consistent – 1:5-8.

5:19-20 – Restoring the erring.

1. Those addressed – brethren.
2. The issue addressed – wandering from the truth. From *planao* and this word is used many times in the NT in terms of delusion or deceit.
3. The solution – *epistrepho* – to convert or turn.
4. The result – save a soul and cover sins.
5. There is not one passage of the Bible that teaches “once saved, always saved!”