

Studies In

James



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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDIES

These studies were originally sermons delivered at the Franklin Union Baptist Church in 1994 between February 20 and May 8. They have been reformatted for easy reading, but they have not been changed appreciably. This means some of the illustrations may be dated, but that should not hinder the communication of ideas.

Sermons, I believe, should always be expositions of the text. It is hoped that this offering will aid the reader in understanding this particular epistle.

James was written by the half brother of our Lord. His letter appears in the section of our New Testament dedicated to letters of writings addressed to the Jewish believers, in contrast to those letters written to Gentile, or non-Jewish believers. They include Hebrews, James, I and II Peter, the three Johanian epistles and Jude. They carry a slightly different tone than Paul's letters to the Gentile churches. They are much more practical as a whole.

Thank you for reading this effort, and may the Spirit of the Holy One bless.

William H. Scarle, Jr.

that for those who are justified, the consequences of sin effect not the eternal destiny of the soul, but the state of fellowship with God.

**IF THEY ARE JUSTIFIED THEIR
ETERNAL LIFE IS SECURE IN JESUS**

- d. We also know that for the unjustified their sin keeps them in a state of condemnation
- e. But, this principle operates the same way in any case
 - (1) Death is the result of sin (death = separation)
 - (2) In the Christian's case, the separation is from fellowship
 - (3) In the non-Christian's case, the separation is God himself, and eternal life)

B. Let me go back to my life as a child to give you an illustration of what James is talking about here

- 1. Electricity can not effect a reaction, cannot release power, unless it finds a **conductor**
- 2. This is why we use insulation on wire and electrical appliances - It stands between the power and the conductor we don't want to receive the power.
- 3. The human body is not a good conductor of electricity, and since electricity will always take the road of least resistance, it is possible for the body to be in contact with electricity and not feel any serious consequences, **UNLESS**
the body becomes a path to a more receptive conductor
- 4. I learned this lesson when as a child I was given a **Red Rider BB** gun for Christmas one year, and set up a range down in the basement of our suburban West Philadelphia home
 - (a) I hung a tin can from a wire, which I attached to an overhead water pipe
 - (b) It was in a good spot, because there was a light bulb close, and I could get a good

**I CAN ONLY PICK A FEW ILLUSTRATIONS, AND
THEY ARE QUITE ARBITRARY, SO I DON'T WANT
ANYONE GETTING BENT OUT OF SHAPE**

1. If a good business opportunity comes along for you, what are your first considerations?

- (a) Is it fair to everyone?
- (b) Will it work for the benefit of everyone concerned?
- (c) Is it something that carries no moral compromise?

OR

- (d) Is the first question - How much money will I make?
- (e) Now you see - that tells you something about the state of your "desires," your "lusts," as it used to be translated

2. If you are going out on a date with someone, what are your first considerations?

- (a) How can I help this person to be a better person?

To see God more clearly

To enjoy the gifts in life that God has given us to enjoy

- (b) How can I get to know this person better by discovering what God's purposes are for his or her life?

- (c) What can we talk about that would help me know where he/she is in their spiritual life, and how I might help?

OR

- (d) What kind of fun can I have with this person?

(Future marriages get into trouble right here. We use other people for our own ends, instead of cultivation from the very beginning an attitude of serving, helping and caring.)

- (e) If the focus is on yourself from the beginning, it is what John calls "lust" of "desire," and it can become a conductor for sin.

- place in the kingdom, so as not to become bitter
2. The other has to do with the rich realizing they are no more important to God than the poor, so they do not become proud.

**WISDOM IS OUR CONSTANT NEED - AND SHOULD BE OUR
CONSTANT PRAYER**

D. I read an story this week about a tradesman during the Medieval period in Europe who enjoyed going to public debates. A friend saw him there - and since the debates were always carried on in Latin - the friend asked him if he understood Latin. He answered that he didn't, but he could always tell which one was wrong, because he would be the first one to get **angry**.

E. This was Lewis's problem.

1. You can reject the Word of God, but you can't change it

IT WILL STILL BE TRUE

2. All you can do is get angry

Because in rejecting God you reject all possible **meaning** for your life

As well as rejecting a **reality** that you know you cannot change.

F. Frank Peretti, in a sermon called "God's Way and Man's Way" pictures Shirley McClain standing on the seashore during a beautiful sunset, declaring at the top of her voice, "**I AM GOD.**"

1. As she stands there - Peretti takes us to heaven, where God hears the declaration.

"I AM GOD!" in a very tiny voice

2. And as God listens, he turns to Michael and says, "Michael, come over here and see this."

3. (Ps. 37:13) "The Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming."

4. Actually, they know it too, and this is why they are so angry.

G. The problem goes beyond unbelievers, however.

1. James says: "My dear brothers...."

2. Christians disobey what they know to be God's Word and then become angry at God when things don't work out

Christians marry unbelievers, knowingly, and then become angry when their world falls apart

(B) The issue is what does this scripture mean?

What is God saying here?

(c) Scripture is profitable for - (II Tim. 3:16)

teaching,
rebuking,
correcting,
training,
equipping.

**THESE ARE OFTEN THE THINGS WE DON'T WANT
THE SCRIPTURE TO MEAN TO US.**

(d) That is why, if we are to obey, very careful listening is required.

B. When we listen and obey, James tells us we find

"THE PERFECT LAW THAT GIVES FREEDOM."

1. What is that?

It is a law which sets the boundaries of the track on which God has directed we run the race of life.

2. If a car runs off the track at the Indianapolis 500

At worst - he will die

At best - he will loose the race

3. We can only live free when we understand the course on which we are running

4. Only fools try it another way

C. God has laid out a course for life which offers unimagined riches for us to enjoy

1. Because of our tendency to (as Paul said) to kick against the goad," we loose both time and opportunity to find God's best

III. FINALLY, JAMES TELLS US THAT THE RESULT OF THE PRACTICE OF OBEDIENCE IS THE ENJOYMENT OF MORAL PURITY, AND DELIVERANCE FROM THE POLUTION OF THE WORLD

RICH MAN, POOR MAN
James 2:1 - 12

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. I saw a cartoon in "Church Life" magazine this past week
A Deacon had just come into the Pastors office and was
saying to him:

"Pastor, do you remember the family in our congregation
that just won the state lottery? Well, don't expect the
church giving to go up because of it. They just joined
another denomination that is more socially **UPSCALE**

1. The only reason this cartoon is funny (or not so funny) to us is
because it contains an element of truth with
which we are a bit uncomfortable
2. Denominations can be ranked, at least nationally, on a
sociological scale calibrated by the wealth of the
membership
3. Episcopalians are somewhere near the top &
Baptists are somewhere near the bottom
4. The very possibility of such a fact is something about
which we are a bit embarrassed as Christians
AND, OUGHT TO BE

B. To review - this is not the first time in this book we have
seen James make a distinction between the RICH and the POOR

1. THE FIRST TIME IS IN CHAPTER 1:9 - 12
2. Here James is concerned about temptation
3. He observes that the temptations of the rich and poor
are different
 - a. For the poor **bitterness is a temptation**
 - b. For the rich **pride is a temptation**
4. One gets the impression that James, as Bishop of the
Church in Jerusalem is familiar with the disparity of
rich and poor in his congregations.
5. **It can be a problem, but not is we follow the teaching of our Lord
Jesus, the Messiah**

4. THE CHURCH NEEDS TO DO THE SAME

D. ASSUMPTION - The rich are rich because they have received the approval of God, and are specially blest

1. Now, it is possible that the rich are so because of a special divine approval,

WE WILL CONSIDER THIS A LITTLE LATER

but, James makes very clear this is not always so.

2. He mentions in verse 6 that it is the rich who are exploiting some of these Christians
3. Other rich are dragging them unjustly into court, because they have leverage with the power structure

4. Others are slandering the name of Jesus, our Messiah

IT SOUNDS ALMOST LIKE TODAY

AND PROVES CONCLUSIVELY THAT THE RICH ARE NOT ALWAYS RICH BECAUSE OF GOD'S BLESSINGS

5. So don't spiritualize your prejudice, James says.

- (a) Giving preference to the rich is simply outside the spirit of Messiah
- (b) No moral or spiritual rationalization will excuse insulting the poor or favoring the rich

E. Although James is talking about ECONOMIC prejudice, other kinds of prejudice can be subjected to the same process of self justification

1. A list shouldn't be necessary, but
racial prejudice
national prejudice
religious prejudice

should give every one a fair idea that none of us is immune to the favoritism James talks about here

2. The problem is that as humans, under the curse of sin, we are very insecure.
 - (a) This is true even after we are Christians
 - (b) The fruits of the Holy Spirit help us to overcome the problem, but we are still more comfortable with the predictable, the familiar,

G. Yes, I believe God will reward those who faithfully use their money for good with special blessings; **sometimes with more money.**

1. But this is not going to create a problem of favoritism, because givers will not allow that.
2. They will insist on being treated as everyone else, and they will see themselves as no greater than the brothers and sisters who have much less.

III. JAMES' TREATMENT OF THE ROYAL LAW

A. This is a fascinating treatment of what Jesus called the greatest of the laws dealing with our relationships with other people

[James calls it the king of the laws, the royal law]

[It is found in Leviticus 19:18, and Jesus gives a midrash (commentary) on it in Luke 10:25 - 37.]

B. My custom is, before developing a sermon on a given passage, to check the commentaries to be sure I have not missed anything of importance.

1. When the commentators come to this passage the thing that captures their whole attention is James' observation that if we keep the whole law, and yet offend at one point, we are guilty of breaking the whole law (vs. 10).
2. The burden of the commentators seems to be to establish beyond dispute that we are all sinners and need to be justified by faith.

C. Now, of course, all this is true, but it is hardly the point James is making, since his subject is favoritism or prejudice in the church

D. What James is saying is that when people are prejudiced, When they show favoritism,

THEY BREAK THE KING OF ALL LAWS.

1. And, when they do this, it is worse than

ADULTERY and

MURDER

Because Jesus, and all the Rabbis of Israel are agreed that this law, from Lev. 19:18 is the King of laws, and

LET US AS CHRISTIANS TAKE THE LEAD IN SAYING TO THE
WORLD THAT

OUR GOD IS NO RESPECTOR OF PERSONS. THAT OUR SAVIOUR
DIED FOR THE WHOLE WORLD, AND THAT WE ARE COMMITTED
TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS AS
OURSELVES. THERE IS NOTHING NEW IN THIS.

AND YET, IT IS ALWAYS NEW.

- F. The next time we meet James is in connection with the conversion of Paul which is recorded in Acts 9
1. Paul spent some time in Damascus after his experience with Jesus on the road from Jerusalem
 2. It is likely he then spent 2 years in Petra, in Arabia
 3. He returned to Damascus, where we have recorded the story of his being secretly removed from the city by being let over the wall in a basket (Acts 9:25)
 4. He then went back to Jerusalem
 - a. The believers were afraid of him
 - b. Barnabas took him to meet the Apostles
 - c. In Gal. 1:18 we read -
"Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other Apostles - only James, the Lord's brother."
- G. Paul makes a trip to Jerusalem to carry gifts for the poor in the Jerusalem Church from the congregations in Antioch (Acts 11:29)
- H. In the meanwhile James had become Bishop of Jerusalem
 (This information comes to us in connection with the story of the imprisonment of Peter and his miraculous escape in Acts 12)
1. Peter had been imprisoned by Herod Agrippa - probably in the Herodian palace in the upper city.
 2. When Peter was freed by the angel he went to the house of Mary, mother of John Mark, on Mt. Zion (the Upper Room).
 3. The Apostles were not there and he left a message:
Acts 12:17 "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then left for another place.
 4. Peter began his missionary career, and James became Bishop of the Jerusalem congregations
- I. Between Paul's first and second missionary journey he visits Jerusalem (A.D. 48/49) for a resolution of the problem of Gentile Christians having to keep the religious laws of Judaism (circumcision, kosher, ceremonial cleansing, etc.).
1. Acts 15 gives us the record of the Jerusalem Council and the decision.
 2. James is the presiding Elder at that conference,

II. FAITH AND WORKS

- A. I have taken the time to sketch this relationship between James and Paul to emphasize that there can in no way be a conflict in their theologies of salvation
- B. It is true that Paul teaches:
Romans 3:28 - For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law."
And James teaches:
James 2:17 - In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead."
- C. But, Paul is talking about Justification, the establishing of a relationship with God, free from guilt
And, James is talking about the nature of Faith
- D. One could argue that the heart is that organ which keeps us alive
1. If the heart stops we are dead
 2. But what if the heart is disconnected from the circulatory system?
 3. What if the blood has no where to go - nothing to do?
 4. Are we not just as dead?
- C. This is what James is saying.
1. Paul is right. **FAITH SAVES**
 2. But the faith that saves **works**.
 3. **If it does not work, it is not faith, and the person who claims it is, is spiritually dead.**
- D. The person who says, "I believe,"
1. But does not worship
 2. Does not care for the needy
 3. Does not obey God
- Is like the demons - they also believe
- E. Paul says we are **JUSTIFIED** by faith - that is by faith we enter into a relationship with God
1. That relationship will work itself out in deeds
 2. If it is invisible - if it does not work
It does not exist

TONGUE TIED

James 3:1 - 18

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- A. Last Week We Looked at James' Definition of Faith as
"A believing that produces deeds appropriate to the object of our faith, the God who works for us."
- B. Chapter three of James simply carries out that theme in terms of a specific bodily organ - **the tongue**
- C. As the Apostle Paul says in Romans 12:1 & 2
Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.
- D. In other words: You may think that the tongue is attached to:
- the mandible
 - the hyoid bone
 - the skull
 - the soft palate
 - the pharynx
- But, James says the tongue is likewise attached to the soul**
1. Through the tongue the soul speaks
 2. Through the tongue our faith works
 3. Through the tongue we offer our spiritual acts of worship to God
- E. It is in the body that faith works
- F. James makes sure we understand this - He isolates a specific organ of the body, **the tongue** and he says to us look at this see how faith works, or how it doesn't work
- G. Three topics:
- 1. The tongue in teaching**
 - 2. The tongue as a trend setter**
 - 3. The tongue as a producer of:**
TURMOIL, or
TRANQUILITY

4. Pastors are obligated to:

"correctly handle the Word of Truth." II Tim. 2:15

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman that does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

C. In First Corinthians 4 Paul makes a telling point in talking about the office of the Apostle/Teacher

1. vss. 1 & 2 **"So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Messiah and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."**

__ vs. 6 "Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, 'Do not go beyond what is written.' Then you will not take pride in one man over against another."

D. James tells us that in teaching, the pastor/teacher must be very careful to keep his thoughts controlled and directed by

1. First - The Word of God
2. Secondly - The Spirit of God

E. He does make a further point that those who do this find that discipline helpful in developing control of other things

BUT, THAT'S ANOTHER SUBJECT FOR ANOTHER TIME

II. THE TONGUE AS A TREND SETTER

A. You often hear people say:

"Well, that was just talk. I really didn't mean that.

(or perhaps - Surely he/she didn't really mean that.)

B. Now I know what people mean when they say things like this.

They mean - I shouldn't have said it. Or, I wish I hadn't said it.

But, once it is said, it is often too late.

III. (FINALLY) THE TONGUE AS A PRODUCER OF TURMOIL OR TRANQUILITY

- A. Here, James gives the answer to the previous question
- B. He begins by asking, "Who is wise and understanding among you? vs. 13
- C. Wisdom informs us that:
Bitter words come from bitter hearts
- D. Bitterness can arise in the heart from any number of sources
Envy
Ambition
(There are surely others, not mentioned)
- E. When you allow your bitterness to direct your speech
the disorder of your spirit is
transported into the community
The fellowship of the believers is destroyed
Evil begins to take over the body of believers,
as it has been allowed to take over the body of
the speaker
- F. James says this is not wisdom.
This does not come from heaven
1. I hear people say, "If you think it, you might as well say it."
Where did that wisdom come from?
From Hell, that's where!
 2. If you have garbage in your soul, you might as well throw it in your
your brother or sister's face!
RIGHT? NO - WRONG
 3. If you have garbage in your soul - and all of us have some of it
Then deal with it with God, who can HEAL
- G. With your brothers and sisters you are
- *Considerate
 - *Submissive
 - *merciful
 - *Sharing only the good fruit of the Spirit
 - *Do not single them out for abuse
 - *Act the Peacemaker

THE LUST FOR POWER

James 4:1 - 17

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- A. In chapter 2 of his letter James teaches us that
Saving faith is working faith
- B. In chapter 3 James reminds us that faith is not working when
The tongue is out of control
- c. In chapter 4 James identifies the central issue that wars
against a working faith

IT IS THE LUST FOR POWER

I. THE LUST FOR POWER

- A. On Wednesday (March 30th) as I began to work on this message,
I heard on CNN that the bones of Adolph Hitler may have been
discovered in Germany
- B. Well, I have less startling, but far more dangerous news.
The soul and spirit of Adolph Hitler has re-entered
society in America in the 1990's
- C. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844 - 1900) was the
philosophical mentor of Adolph Hitler
Nietzsche died in an insane asylum at age 56
 - 1. Very simply, Nietzsche taught that the morality of
Christianity, held by his father and grandfather,
who were Lutheran clergymen, was a **slave morality**
 - 2. It needs to be rejected for a new morality based on
the will to power, which will produce a small race
of "Ubermench" or supermen, who will be able to rule
the world
- D. In America we used to believe such expressions as
 - *Public servants
 - *Service professions
 - *Military service

Philipp. 2:5ff Your attitude should be the same as that of the Messiah, Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not think equality with God something to be grasped. but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!

Therefore (because of this) God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him a name above every name...

2. Paul

I Cor. 3:5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants through whom you came to believe - as the Lord himself assigned to each his task.

3. We could go on...

But the important thing to see is that for Christians, the power of the resurrection is in **SERVANTHOOD**, not **THE LUST FOR POWER**

Paul says (Philipp. 3:9ff) I want a "righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Messiah and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing his suffering, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

James goes on to show us that those who follow the world;
Those who lust for power
Often define that lust in terms of **JUSTICE**

E. What is the answer?

1. For Christians the answer is to give up power claims
and be a **servant people**,
Under the Reign of God, and under
The Lordship of Messiah

2. This will not always be easy, as the life of our Lord
clearly demonstrated

**III. JAME'S FINAL POINT IS THAT THOSE WHO LUST FOR
POWER OFTEN ASSUME THEY HAVE THE TIME TO GET IT -
THAT THEY CAN CONTROL TOMORROW**

A. James reminds them that God, and God alone, controls
tomorrow

You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead
you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's
will, we will live and do this and that."

B. Let me close with Stuart Hamblin's words:

When my eyes behold the stars this heart of mine is filled
with wonder. My poor mind cannot grasp their array.

But the hand that spilled them there all across the wide
heavens had a plan when he placed them that way.//////

In this world of fear and doubt on my knees I ask the
question, Why a lonely, heavy cross I must bear.....

Then he tells me in my prayer it's because I am
trustworthy. He gives me strength, far more than my
share.

THE UNDERSIDE OF RICHES

James 5:1 - 6

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

- A. The idea that Saving faith is Working faith still controls the subject matter of chapter 5
1. James introduced this teaching in ch. 2
 2. In ch. 3 he relates Working Faith to keeping the tongue under control
 3. In ch. 4 he examines the central issue that wars against a Working faith
i.e. The Lust for Power
- B. In ch. 5 he introduces a note of realism that we would rather not hear, but that we all know is true
1. If we live as a servant people
 2. If we reject power as a goal, and give our lives in service to God and man, as God wills, and as Jesus gave us the pattern
 3. **WE MAY VERY WELL GET STOMPED ON BY THE WORLD**
- C. There is one comfort in this first section of chapter 5
1. When James talks about "you rich people"
i.e. The wealthy land owners
The powerful class
The exploiters of this world
He does not seem to be talking about the Church
 2. He is rather offering comfort to those of the who are victims of these people
- D. Now I would want to be cautious here -
1. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that believers could be included in this class
 2. Also, we need to understand that James is not condemning wealth as such
 3. **HE IS TALKING ABOUT THE ABUSE OF POWER**
As a continuation of the thought that believers should not lust after power
 4. Jesus himself was crucified by those who felt he threatened their power

- E. James wants his flock to know that although the rich seem powerful - they are fools
Although they seem to have much - they have nothing

II. THE CRIME OF DISHONESTY

- A. Not only do these powerful rich have nothing to commend them to God in the day of judgment
THEY ARE CONDEMNED AS THIEVES
- B. In their lust for wealth and power they have cheated their employees
1. They have been stingy and greedy when it came to paying those who harvested their crops, and toiled in their fields
 2. They have paid only what they had to get their workers, not what they could pay for work well done
 3. Instead of encouraging those who worked to make them wealthy, they unleashed prayers of resentment which reached the ears of the Almighty God
- C. The "bottom line" may have been improved, but the final verdict will be pronounced by a higher court
THIEF, ROBBER, BANDIT, PROFITEER, CROOK, SWINDELLER
- D. There will be no appeal to the heavenly court on the basis that:
"BUSINESS IS BUSINESS"
- E. The duty of the stewards of the earth is to love God and their fellow man
- F. Paul advises employers (Eph. 6:9) to treat their employees as servants of God, and as they would want God to treat them

Because both employer and employee are servants of the
MASTER IN HEAVEN

- E. James seconds Paul in this -
He assures the oppressed and the exploited that their prayers are heard

CONCLUSION

These verses are here in scripture to remind the saints that God is aware that the innocent suffer.

God is aware that power is abused,
That the guiltless are exploited,
That those who live by faith will be taken advantage
of at times.

But as the Apostle Paul said:

Romans 12:19 - 21 "Do not take revenge my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary,

If your enemy hunger, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

B. And in the light of all this, James says to us:

"Be patient, then brothers, until the Lord's coming." vs.7

1. Makro - thumeo: to exercise great suffering or long suffering
2. In other words: discipline yourselves to put up with it until then, because it will all be worth it
3. The Apostle Paul says it in these words:

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits with eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed...." Rom. 8:18 & 19

C. Notice that James, and for that matter, the other writers of the New Testament, do not emphasize heaven
But, the coming and the reign of Messiah on the earth

1. Even John, when he records Jesus teaching about -
Going to prepare a place for us,
follows it by saying, **I will come again.**

2. It is the coming of Jesus that is emphasized in the Apostolic teaching

It is: **"...the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus the Messiah, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good." Titus 2:13 & 14**

D. Of course we shall live with him forever, but

1. It is like a little child waiting at the window for grandmother to come

They know she is coming, and they can't wait.
Mother tells them it may be a half-hour before she gets here, but they station themselves at the window

1. Even in those early days they could observe certain steps that were begun and finished
 - (a) the Gospel was to be preached
 - In Judea
 - In Sameria
 - To the ends of the earth
 - (b) They saw that happening
 2. They had very little comprehension as to the extent of "the ends of the earth"
 - Nevertheless, they could see progress
- C. In our time we can see far more progress

D. Let me outline for you what we have seen, and are seeing in our time

1. There is a phrase in Jeremiah 30:7 which reads:

"It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it."

It refers to their restoration to the Land of Israel following the Babylonian captivity

2. A similar phrase is used in Daniel in regard to the final return of Israel to the Land at the end of the end - **The final days** - Daniel 12:1

"At that time Michael, the great prince, who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until now."

3. The point is this:

- (a) God's plan for history is to rule a united earth in peace from Jerusalem with the Messiah King on the throne
- (b) This requires that the Jewish people, God's Chosen People, be back in the Chosen Land to receive their King.

5. The point is this:

- A. I do not know how close we are - but we are watching a process - We are seeing the harvest move on to completion
- B. In 1985, during the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, Mayor Teddy Kollek spoke against the background of a painting of Jerusalem which included the sight of the new Temple that the Bible says will one day be rebuilt on the Temple Mount. Welcoming thousands of Christians who had crammed into the Binyanei Ha'Uma auditorium, he said,

Thank you for being here, for coming here faithfully every year. Your faith gives us strength...I am glad I am speaking here against the background of this beautiful painting of Jerusalem. It is not yet the Jerusalem of today. If you look properly, you will see the Temple, the Holy of Holies, has been restored! We believe the Messiah will come; you believe he will return; He will overcome all difficulties. He will come if we pray. And we all hope it will be soon. Meanwhile, we are grateful for your coming every year expressing this faith of yours and this faith of ours ...Our return is the first sign that the city will be existing again as it is in this painting!

6. James says: 5:8 "You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near."

III. KEEP THE CHURCH WORTHY TO MEET HIM IN THE AIR

A. James tells us not to:

"Grumble against each other, brothers (sisters), or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door."

- 1. In other words, keep yourselves, and the Church pure in the light of His coming

HOW DID THAT DOCTRINE GET STARTED

James 5: 12 - 20

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

A. Among the several topics that James discusses with the Hebrew/Christian congregations in the first century Church, two are prominent,

1. Saving faith needs to be understood as faith that works
2. One evidence of working faith is how we use speech, or the tongue

These ideas are important to James

B. Although this particular concluding section of the letter could be entitled "A Few Final Thoughts", James actually is going back to chapter 3 and verses 9 and 10

"With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be."

C. This accounts, I think, for his use of the phrase:

"Above all, my brothers ..." in verse 12

D. He is finishing up,

and as he does, he says, **"Now Remember, above everything else..."**

E. There are actually four ideas mentioned by James as he winds up this letter

1. Simplicity of speech
2. Prayer and Praise
3. Sickness
4. Confession of sin

But, they are all intertwined, all related to each other, all aspects of the use of language, especially the language of prayer

F. We will look at all four, but some more carefully than others

2. But, even more importantly, oil is a sign of the Holy Spirit
- C. The healing ministry of the Church is then an aspect of the ministry of prayer
- D. It is connected in the mind of James with the forgiveness of sins, and this connection has caused confusion, especially in the Latin, or Roman, Church, where this practice was defined as a sacrament
- E. What James describes is much simpler than that
 1. In some cases, sickness is the result of sin
Not all cases. Not even most cases.
But, in I Cor. 11, Paul suggests that in some cases God uses sickness as a discipline (I Cor. 11:30)

"This is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep"

2. When this is the case, the prayer for healing includes a prayer for forgiveness
If he has sinned, he will be forgiven."

III. CONFESSION OF SIN

- A. Now how can we know when a brother or a sister needs prayer for forgiveness?
 1. Obviously we are not to jump to the conclusion that because a person is sick, they have sinned
 2. Scripture is crystal clear that sickness is a part of life in a fallen world
 illustrations are easy to remember:
 Job, Lazerus, Paul and many of the people Jesus healed
- B. However, if we sense God is speaking to us about our sin through our sickness, there is instruction here
Verse 16 - "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."
- C. Find a brother or a sister that you trust
 1. Confess your sin to that brother or sister
 2. Allow them to go to God with you as you ask for

G. This is what these last verses are all about

1. What a joy there is in helping a brother or sister to get back into fellowship with the Lord
2. These verses flow from the preceding verses
 - (a) They are not about salvation
 - (b) They are about restoration

H. But, if we are going to experience this kind of spiritual care for one another

- (a) We will have to be mature
- (b) We will have to be humble enough and honest enough to seek out a trustworthy brother or sister when we need to confess sin, and need someone to pray with us
- (c) And then, hopefully, we will be able to find a brother or sister who is mature enough to engage in this ministry
 - Who will keep a confidence
 - Who will not condemn
 - Who will seek to understand, and exercise a loving honesty that will heal rather than hinder

I. These are the ministries of Prayer and Praise James wants his congregations to enjoy

As a Pastor - He has the mind of the Master
He is concerned for the health of the BODY

So should we be.

The Lord bless you
and keep you: The
Lord make his face
to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you; The
Lord lift up his countenance
upon you, and give you
peace. AMEN

