

Bible Study # 44
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General Epistles Series—James

This evening we are in the book of James. We want **to get into and address this book of James**. We have already mentioned the theme that runs through each of these General Epistles—James, Peter, John and Jude—the theme of faith, hope and love. We went through and saw that in quite a bit of detail last time. Of course, Jude contains warnings against apostasy, against falling away and the exhortation “to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered.”

The book of James was written in the early 60s A.D. We would date it about 61 A.D. Of course, James wrote it. There are several James mentioned in the New Testament. The James who wrote the book of James was the brother, or more properly stated, the half-brother of Jesus Christ. Jesus had several brothers as well as sisters. His brothers James, Simon and Jude are all mentioned and are enumerated in the Gospels. He also had several sisters.

James had grown up with Jesus Christ. He was somewhat younger, perhaps two to four years younger than Jesus Christ. Even though he was not one of the twelve and was not one who followed Christ in His ministry, yet it seems clear that James was converted in the immediate aftermath of the resurrection. There certainly had been nothing of greater impact to have struck him than to have seen his brother, who was dead, stand before him alive.

We are told by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:7 that He specifically appeared to James, as well as the others. Christ, in a very personal way, appeared to James and manifested Himself after the resurrection. We are not given the details of the account in the Gospels, but Paul alludes to it because there was that 40-day span between the time of His resurrection and the time of His ascension into heaven during which Jesus appeared many times (Acts 1:3).

In the aftermath of this, James was converted and became a very leading apostle. He was the presiding apostle at the Church in Jerusalem, serving as the pastor and overseer of the headquarters Church. He is the one who presided at the ministerial conference of Acts 15. He is the one that is enumerated, along with Peter and John, as one of the three pillars of the Church. He is catalogued by Paul in Galatians 2:9 as

being one of the upright supports, one of the strong stays and supports of the New Testament Church. He is one of the key figures. He was looked up to and was highly respected.

The book of James was *a letter that went out and was addressed* not simply to the Jews or to those in Judea where James was, but *to all the tribes of Israel*.

James 1:1, “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.” This is who the book of James is addressed to. It was an address to all of the tribes of Israel, not simply the tribe of Judah.

Realize that there was a certain awareness of where the tribes had scattered. The identity of the 12 tribes had not been entirely lost by this time. We find a concentration of remnants of the 12 tribes in the area to the east of the Euphrates River, which was not at this point a part of the Roman Empire but of what was called the Parthian Empire. The Parthian Empire was the other great empire that lay east of the Euphrates. The Euphrates was pretty much the dividing line between Rome and Parthia. There were a number of Israelites who were in the area east of the Euphrates because after the captivity of the ten tribes (2 Kings 17), they had settled in that area to the east and up on the southern shore of the Black Sea.

According to Ezekiel’s prophecy, a 390-year period would transpire for Northern Israel (Ezekiel 4:5). We date the 390 years from the time that Northern Israel went into captivity in 721 B.C. If you bring it down 390 years, you come down to 331 B.C., which is the year that Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire. It was the year that saw the release of the Israelite captives who had been subject to the Medes and the Persians. Within the next couple of decades was the beginning of the so-called Celtic invasions into Europe, which came up across and around the Black Sea. It was the time of the coming of the Gauls. Really, it was many of the Israelite tribes.

There’s a lot that we could go into on some of that, but the point is these people came up from the Black Sea, up the Danube River basin, up into the area of modern day France, and many crossing up into Britain. There had been an earlier migration to Britain at the time of the captivity of some who had escaped. There had been previous migrations in that area. There were concentrations of Israelites in Europe, as well as the Parthian Empire who were remnants of the 12

tribes. We could go into many things, of pinning down specific tribes and where they were located at the time. And there were a number of migrations yet to occur. But do you realize that most of the original 12 apostles actually went to one or the other of the 12 tribes—and we could track them? Perhaps, we will at a later time.

The book that James wrote was very widely circulated. It circulated as far as Britain. It circulated in the Parthian Empire. It circulated throughout the Middle East, in terms of Judea, and in the area of Asia Minor.

James is a very basic book. It deals with practical, basic principles of Christian living. We have seen that James has a **primary theme of faith**. It sets the stage for the progression of faith, hope and love that we see through the General Epistles. James deals with faith, but he deals with faith in a very practical way. He deals with faith in action. He addresses faith in our lives.

We are going to go through and note 12 component parts of the book of James. One of the things that James addresses is the importance of becoming a completely mature Christian.

James 3:2, “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man,”

The word translated “perfect” is a word that means “fully mature” or “a completely developed person”—a completely mature Christian. It is the same word that is used when Paul addresses spiritual maturity in Hebrews 5.

Hebrews 5:12-14, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God [in other words, the most basic principles of God’s word]; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age [mature], that is, those who by reason of use [practice] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Paul draws a point here in terms of spiritual maturity. He describes the difference between being spiritually mature and spiritually a baby. He says a little baby can’t sit down and eat a big rib eye steak. He can’t digest it; he can’t handle it. He needs milk! That’s all that a little baby’s stomach can digest.

Paul compares that to the most basic elemental principles of Christianity and then says that strong meat belongs to those that are of full age. It’s for those who are mature. The word that is

translated “of full age” is exactly the same word that is used back in James 3:2 and is rendered “perfect.” That’s what it means. It means someone who is “fully mature,” someone who is “completely developed.” It means someone who is a “fully-developed Christian.” James wants each of his readers to become a completely mature and fully-developed Christian. With this idea in mind, we are going to note a little more, as we go through, that this is really faith in action. This is a mature, developed faith that produces fruits, works and actions in our lives.

Let’s notice, as we go through the book of James, the **12 themes that reflect the various components of a mature Christian**. James 1:1 is the introduction.

(1) The first component in James 1:2-18 is **the attitude a mature, fully-developed Christian has toward trials and temptations**. It addresses the response of a fully-mature Christian towards trials and temptations.

James 1:2, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials...” You know, when you read that, that’s talking about something that’s a little more mature than what most of us have come to. Do you just get all excited and jump up and down and you’re so happy every time you have a trial? ‘Boy, I have a trial. It just really makes my whole day.’ What did James mean when he said, “count it all joy when you fall into various [different] trials”? It’s not that the trial is fun. A trial isn’t fun for anybody. I don’t care how mature you are or how long you’ve been around or anything. It’s not the trial that’s enjoyable or pleasant.

Verses 3-4, he says, “knowing that the testing of your faith works patience. But let patience have it’s perfect work [again, you have the same word “perfect”—this complete, mature, fully-developed work], that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” Let patience be fully developed and matured in you that you might be perfect, that you might be complete, that you might be fully, entirely, whole, completely developed and matured, not lacking in anything.

Verses 5-6, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally...But let him ask in faith, with no doubting [KJV, “nothing wavering”], for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.” If you approach it that way, God doesn’t answer that.

Verse 7-8, “For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

God requires a commitment. To be double-minded is to lack commitment; you're not really resolved in a specific course of action. You're pulled in two different ways. You're kind of "hedging your bets," as it were. It is a lack of total commitment. When God says to ask in faith nothing wavering, what needs to not waver is the depth of our commitment. If our commitment is wavering because we are double-minded, we're not really totally committed. Until we come to that level of commitment, God's not going to pay a lot of attention.

Verses 12-18, he goes on and says, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation [endures trials]; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."

You see the subject of trials and temptations is addressed here. The thing that is joyful about a trial is not going through of the trial; it's not the trial itself. The joy is the result, the consequence. It is the spiritual character that is developed as a result. Our faith when it is tried works patience. We learn to wait on God. We need to develop that kind of a relationship with God.

When we lack wisdom, we don't understand. We can ask God for wisdom, but we need to ask in faith, not wavering in our commitment, but single-minded in our approach. We need to go to God in faith, asking Him for the wisdom to understand and to have the perception of what is going on in our lives. God says that He will answer that prayer. The joy comes from the results, the spiritual character that results from the trial.

I don't think anybody enjoys having a problem. But we can probably all look back and see results of trials. I know I certainly can look at certain trials I have gone through in my life, and I hope that I never have to go through them again. But I wouldn't take anything for having gone through them. I wouldn't take anything for some of the

results, the consequences and certain things that I learned as a result. Even though it was not at all pleasant in the process of going through it, there was a certain relationship with God that was built.

James initially addresses the attitude towards trials and temptations of a completely developed, fully-mature Christian.

(2) The second component in verses 19-27 is **the reception of God's Word**. He addresses the way in which a fully-mature Christian receives God's Word.

James 1:19-20, "...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." He says, 'Be swift to hear and slow to speak.' So many times we reverse that. Ever been quick to speak and slow to hear? I guess with all of us it has happened one time or another. It should tell us something that God gave us two ears and one mouth. He didn't reverse it. He could have given us a mouth on each side of our head and one ear in the middle. God didn't choose to do it that way. I don't know all the reasons why. Maybe part of it was He wanted us to spend twice as much time listening as talking because He said that we're to "be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"—not quick to "fly off the handle," not quick to form an opinion, not quick to jump to conclusions because that doesn't lead to the righteousness of God

Verses 21-22, then he says, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save our souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

Verses 23-24, he then draws the analogy that if you listen and don't do, you are like somebody looking in the mirror and not acting on what they see.

Verses 25-26, "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless." We are kidding ourselves because real religion involves action.

Verse 27, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit the orphans and widows in their trouble [KJV, "afflictions"], and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

We focus here on how a mature developed Christian receives the Word. He is quick to

listen, not quite so quick to speak and receives with meekness the implanted (KJV, “engrafted”) Word. He desires to look into that perfect law of liberty, to have God’s Word actually put into him and to become a part of him. There is receptivity to the Word. There is an approach we see in terms of trials and temptations. We learn to value and appreciate the character that is developed and to be receptive to the Word.

(3) The third component in James 2:1-13 is our attitude toward others. It involves impartiality in the spiritual area when it comes to regarding the worth and the value of someone else.

James 2:1-3, “My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy [vile] clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine [KJV, “gay”] clothes and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and say to the poor man, ‘You stand there,’ or ‘Sit here at my footstool.’”

In other words, don’t make spiritual distinctions based on physical criteria. Don’t use outward physical things or economic status to decide someone’s worth. Someone comes in to your assembly with gold rings and goodly apparel, and someone comes in and is poor and in worn, tattered clothes. If you have respect for him who wears the gay clothing, you are showing partiality.

Let me just pause for a second. I want to call your attention to something to illustrate a point. Notice how the English language has changed since 1611. Sometimes things are not a matter of a mistranslation, it is that the meaning of a word in English has simply changed.

He’s talking about someone having “gay” clothing. If you were talking today and said somebody had on “gay” clothing, the connotation would be a little different than what Paul was addressing here. Here’s a word that’s basically changed its meaning. In this case, it meant something that was bright or something that was festive. We have seen people in what we would today term “gay” clothing. You see them and you don’t have to do too much figuring to figure what they are. And certainly in some of our major cities, there are areas like that. There are an awful lot of them that are easy to pick out, out there on the street. It’s kind of hard to describe, but if you were to drive down the street, you would know what I mean—I don’t think you would be in doubt.

That’s not the meaning of the word “gay” in James 2:3. A lot of words in the English language have simply changed their meaning over a period of years. Sometimes when you read something in the KJV translation, you have to consider what the word meant at the time it was translated in 1611 A.D. because sometimes it has taken on a different meaning over the years, and we don’t always get the same impact of it that people who read it 100 or 300 years ago received.

He says two people come in and one is dressed very nicely and indicates a very wealthy, prominent individual. Someone else comes in and by his appearance, gives the impression of abject poverty. Don’t make a distinction based on that. To the person who looks rich, influential and impressive, you say, ‘We have something special for you.’ You give him the best seat in the house and really go all-out to try to make him welcomed. Then someone comes in and appears to be poor, to have a very low economic and social status, and they are kind of relegated to the “back burner.” ‘Maybe we can find a spot for you.’ They are kind of ignored and shunted off to the side. James is addressing this matter of respect of persons in terms of power, status and economic circumstance.

Verses 8-9, “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” Because the law says you shall love your neighbor as yourself, that’s the royal law. In other words, we are to treat every human being with proper respect. There is, in the context of relationships in the Church, the realization that all human beings are of special worth and value before God. God does not judge the worth and value of someone based on the size of that person’s bank account or the degrees that person has after his name. God does not look at economic criteria, race, education or physical components to determine spiritual worth and value—and neither should we.

Now there are obviously physical relationships that we have in this world. The scripture tells us that there’s neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond or free; we’re all one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). That is relative to our spiritual relationship (our relationship with God) and the basis of our proper relationship and valuing of one another as Christians. It’s the basis of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Obviously, there are physical relationships in this physical life. We are still male and female on a physical level. There is that physical distinction, but it does not carry over in terms of our worth and our value to God. God does not look at someone as being of more worth or more value or as being spiritually superior because of race, sex or economic status. Those are not spiritual criteria. James is bringing out that there were circumstances of that matter in the Church at this time, just as there are today.

Servitude was a very common thing in the Greek and Roman world. You have many circumstances of that even existing in the Church. In fact in several of Paul's Epistles, he addressed instructions to masters and instructions to servants because there were Christians in both categories (Ephesians 6). But there was a spiritual relationship that transcended all earthly physical components. In some cases today, some of us may work for others of us. There are various things that are there, but that is not something that determines the spiritual worth and value.

James brings out that the fully-developed Christian properly esteems his neighbor as himself and does not make some distinction based on economic status. The same principle would apply to other criteria as well, whether it is race or whatever. Any of those things that would be the outward physical distinctions are not the basis of a spiritual judgment or spiritual valuing. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves and not get into this attitude that the world has of wanting to show special favor to someone who is in a position of power, kowtowing to someone who has power and status and taking advantage of someone who is defenseless. God says to deal with people fairly and equitably regardless of their status. This is addressed in the first 13 verses of chapter 2. We need to recognize that all of us are judged by this perfect law of liberty.

I might just add one other thing in regard to the matter of dress. The matter of dress is not the basis of making distinctions. What is appropriate is that we, as individuals, show a respect for God. This is not advocating that people should show a lack of respect for God by just dressing in the worse thing they have when they come to Church. That's not what is being described at all. In fact, the clear implication is that the person who came in the vile raiment came in the best that he had. It just wasn't much. In some cases, if there is someone who is not able to buy what is appropriate to wear, we can have an attitude of

love and concern toward our neighbor and share with them. Perhaps, we can give them some of what we have. We could have that attitude of sharing and helping rather than standing back and kind of looking down on them. They're doing the best they can do, but they are very limited in what they have. Part of that is the principle behind our "used clothing."

(4) The fourth component in James 2:14-26 is **our credentials of living faith**. It describes the kind of faith that will characterize a mature, fully-developed Christian.

Verse 14, we see that it is the kind of faith that is living faith—faith that is coupled with action.

Verses 15-17 bring out that we see our brother or sister destitute and we have an attitude of "depart in peace, be warmed and filled"—'Hope things get better for you.' But you don't help them; you don't do anything. You don't avail yourself of the action you could do to help them in their circumstance. What does it profit? Faith that does not have works is dead. If we really are concerned and our heart is really in the right place, then we are going to desire to do something.

Verse 18, then James goes on to address the fact that we demonstrate our faith by our actions.

James 2:20, and that, "faith without works is dead."

Verse 21, he showed Abraham was justified by works, but we are also told Abraham was justified by faith. That's right! It was his faith with his works.

Verse 22, "...and by works was faith made perfect?" —Made complete, made fully mature, fully developed. This is the same word here. His faith was completed. He completed his faith by acting on it.

Verse 23, "...Abraham believed God, ..." And because he believed God, he acted on what God said.

Verse 25, Rahab did the same thing. We find here the living faith that is a component of the completely mature, fully-developed Christian.

(5) The fifth component in James 3:1-12 is **the use of the tongue**.

James 3:1, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers [KJV, "masters"] knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment [KJV, "greater condemnation]." This word "masters" is a word that has changed its meaning over a period of time. It is used in the older English sense of "teacher," as in "schoolmaster." That's a term that you don't hear very much anymore. It used to be common years ago to talk about the

schoolmaster. The term “master” in that sense is still commonly used that way in England when referring to a teacher.

Actually many people don’t realize there are three totally different words in the Greek language that are all translated by the one English word “master.” One of them is a common word referring to a teacher. There is a second Greek word, “*kurios*,” also translated “master” that was a title of respect. It literally referred to someone who was an owner or possessor of property. It was a title of respect and most closely akin to our English word “Mister,” which is derived from “master.” It is a title of respect for a property owner and has come to be the universal title of respect in the English language. The Greeks had a word that was very similar to that and used in the same way that is translated “master” in the New Testament.

There is a third word that is translated “master” that’s only used one time in the New Testament. That’s in the verse in Matthew.

Matthew 23:8-10, when Jesus said (KJV), “But be not called Rabbi: for One is your Master, even Christ; and all you are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for One is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be called masters; for One is your Master, even Christ.” When He said, ‘don’t call any man Father, and don’t call any man Master,’ it’s a totally different word. It’s not the word that’s the title of respect, and it’s not the word that means teacher. It was a term that had the connotation of a spiritual guide. It was more of a religious title. It was used in the Greek world to refer to someone who guided them through the maze of the mystery religions. It had the connotation of someone to whom you gave over your spiritual guidance; he was going to guide you through the mysteries.

That was a relationship that’s alien to the Scriptures. We may have those who teach us, but in that sense, God—His Spirit and through His Word—is ultimately our guide. While God may use human instruments to help teach and expound that Word, they are not the source of it.

James 3:1, when he says (KJV), “...be not many masters [The word here is “teacher”; ‘Don’t all desire to be teachers’ is what he is saying.], knowing that we shall receive the greater [the sterner, the more strict] condemnation.”

The point he is making is don’t think that it’s some “glory” job to be the one who is teaching. Understand something: with that responsibility comes a stricter, sterner judgment. God is going to scrutinize much more closely what those who

are in the role of teachers say and do than anyone else because there is a responsibility. The teacher impacts those who are learning; therefore, he is more highly accountable. James warns of that. People should not be quick to want to volunteer to do the teaching.

Then he begins to address the subject of what we say.

Verse 2, “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.” The fact is that all of us offend in one way or another.

Verses 3-5, “Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things.”

Verse 10, “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.” Sometimes out of the same mouth proceeds blessings and cursing.

Verses 11-12, “Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring can yield both salt water and fresh.” Some things need to be one way or the other. We have the use of the tongue that is brought out—the way we utilize the tongue. The use of his tongue is shown to be a very important part of a mature, fully-developed Christian.

(6) The sixth component in James 3:13-18 is true wisdom.

James 3:13-14, “Who is a wise and understanding man among you? [Is there someone who really has knowledge among you?] Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.” That is not something to be proud of.

Verse 15, “This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.” This is wisdom that does not come from God; it is earthly, sensual and devilish.

Verses 16-17, “For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” These are the seven components of wisdom.

Verse 18, “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” Righteousness and peace go together. We see godly wisdom, true wisdom, wisdom that results in appropriate actions. Wisdom is not based on striving for status and position, but is based on humility, on serving, on giving, on helping, on a willingness to humble the self and serving others. Wisdom is pure and peaceable, gentle, easily entreated. In other words, it is full of mercy, of good fruits, with no partiality, “wrangling” and hypocrisy. We see this contrast here. We see the wisdom that will characterize the mature, fully-developed Christian.

(7) The seventh component in James 4:1-10 is **the amiability, humility and lack of worldliness.**

James 4:1-4, “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in you members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your own pleasures...Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

We have to make a choice. We have to choose between God and the world. We cannot desire to fit in with the world and fit in with God at the same time. Friendship with the world is enmity with God because God does not value and approve of the things that the world takes for granted. God does not value the things that the world values and approves.

It’s proper and appropriate that God’s people should be different. We shouldn’t be just like the world. If we look like the world, act like the world, be like the world and fit in with the world, then we’re not fitting in with God.

In verse 5, the scripture warns us that the Spirit that dwells in us yearns jealously or it lusts enviously. There is that nature in us that really kind of desires and yearns after, in kind of an envious way, the glitter and the glamour that the world holds out. It looks enticing, and there is a nature in us that is constantly pulling us in that direction.

Verse 5, “Or do you think the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who [which] dwells in us yearns jealously?’” No. We are warned of that. That’s our nature and that’s the constant pull. That desire, that pull, has always been since Adam and

Eve in the garden until now. Yet, it is something, if yielded to, which alienates us from God.

We are told that God gives more grace.

Verses 6-10, “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

We are told how to get close to God. We are told to renew that relationship with God. It addresses the concept of how we get along with one another, which ties right on into our relationship with the world, which leads right on into the attitude of humility, which is really our relationship with God. These are tied together. The way we get along with one another, the way we get along with the world and the way we get along with God are all tied together in this matter of relationships. The types of relationships that characterize the mature and fully-developed Christian are described in the first ten verses of James 4.

(8) The eighth component in James 4:11-12 is **the consideration of our fellow man.**

James 4:11-12, “Do not speak evil one of another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?” The attitude of the completely mature, fully-developed Christian is his consideration of his fellow man which is described here. It’s not an attitude of speaking evil and sitting in a judging and condemning way.

(9) The ninth component in James 4:13-17—5:7 is **the attitude and the approach of business affairs.**

James 4:13, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’...” You have all these great plans.

Verse 14, “whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” It doesn’t say you shouldn’t make any plans, but it says our plans need to be subject to God’s will.

Verse 15, “Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’” ‘My plans are to do this or that, if God is willing.’ We are not to just go charging off, thinking we will do this or that and making this money, etc. We must have a state of mind of recognizing that our plans are subject to God’s will.

Verse 16, we are not to rejoice in boasting like that. That kind of boasting is evil.

We are still dealing with the subject of business affairs and our attitude toward business.

James 5:1-7, “Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.”

Here it describes the attitude that has caused some to mistreat others and to hold back the wages of their laborers. In other words, they are so greedy and anxious for gain that they take advantage of those who work for them.

Just yesterday there was an interesting thing in the news. There is a major component, really the starting component, of the whole American computer industry—the industry that makes the tools that fetches the chips that then are the basic components for all the electronic devices. Well, there is only one company in the United States that manufactures the tools that make the chips, and it’s up for sale. Guess who is buying it. The Japanese! They will have absolute control of the starting point because without the tools, you can’t make the chips, and without the chips, you can’t make anything else. The Japanese will be in control.

An interesting thing is pointed out as to why an American company wouldn’t buy it—it kind of ties in with this—IBM, none of them, wanted it. They said the problem was the approach the American companies were taking was the desire for big profits very quickly. In this industry, the profits were stretched out over a much longer

period of time. There were not going to be any big profits very quickly; you had to take a more long-term view. Nobody here in the United States wanted to do that.

This attitude of greed or people who are out to get everything they can get has led to a lot of the economic problems we’re having. Very shortsighted economic decisions have been made in this country. God shows what’s going to happen.

People will take advantage of those who work for them and hold back what would be rightfully theirs. People who have this greedy attitude take advantage.

The scriptures are very clear and describe in a very picturesque way the aftermath of some nuclear confrontation. I think that is what is described here in verse 3, when it talks about the ‘gold and silver being corroded’ and how it ‘will eat your flesh as it were fire.’ I don’t think that can describe anything else but the results or the aftermath of some nuclear confrontation where you have vast stores of precious metals that become radioactive. Gold does not rust in that sense of the word, but it is very receptive to radioactivity. The exposure becomes very highly radioactive, and it will eat your flesh like fire.

When you compare this with Isaiah 2:18-21 and with Revelation 6:14-16, you find the description of the day of the Lord. It describes the great, the mighty and the rich throwing their gold to the moles and the bats in the caves of the earth, trying to get rid of it.

If you put Isaiah 2, James 5 and Revelation 6 together, what you find is the description of what happens when this horde of precious metals that a bunch of greedy people have put together to try to buy their way out of trouble becomes radioactive. They are going to find out that they are in a big hurry to get rid of it. The point it is making here is the futility of putting your trust in selfish, greedy things but having an attitude of being fair and realizing that our plans are very subject to God’s disposal.

(10) The tenth component in James 5:7-12 is patience and endurance.

James 5:7-8, “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” Realize that we have to wait on God and that patience and endurance of waiting on God is a

vital component of a mature, fully-developed Christian.

(11) The eleventh component in James 5:13-18 is conduct in affliction.

James 5:13-18, “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”

The point is we see this description in terms of our conduct in affliction. We need an attitude of growing closer to God, praying and walking with God, drawing closer to God, learning to trust God, having our confidence directed in God, having an attitude of praying for one another, seeking to encourage one another and recognizing that the great men and women of the Bible of whom we read were human beings just like we are. They had the same weaknesses, the same problems. They had the same things that make them human, just as we do.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. He was just as weak and fallible a human being as all of us. He was a human being. He wasn't some unique different sort of person that couldn't be touched with the feelings of human weakness and frailty. But he was close to God and God listened.

(12) The twelfth component in James 5:19-20 is the effort in behalf of an erring brother.

James 5:19, “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” That is the final component.

If you go through, there are 12 components that outline the book. The various components comprise what it means to be a completely mature, fully-developed Christian.

Let's notice briefly our study questions. I think most of them have been commented upon.

1) Why are we told to “count it all joy” when we have problems?

This is brought out in James 1:2. Our character is purged and refined and strengthened by the trials which we go through.

Hebrews 12:11 brings that out as well, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” It is not going through the problem that's enjoyable, but it is the aftermath, the consequence.

2) Does God tempt us?

No. God may try us, but He never tempts us. “Tempt” carries with it the connotation of trying to “trip up” someone. God never tries to trip us up, never tries to get us to fall.

James 1:13 brings that out. God may try us, but He never tempts us in the sense of trying to trip us up. We are basically tempted to sin; our human nature takes care of most of that.

James 1:14 says we are drawn away of our own lust and enticed. That's where the temptation comes in.

3) What is “pure religion”?

James 1:27, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

There are two components. One involves helping those who are not able to return the favor, those who are not in a position to make it worth your while. It is helping others from a disinterested standpoint.

It is another thing to help somebody who is in a position to help you back. Kind of like the scandal involving several senators who are in trouble now because they interceded on behalf of this fellow who owned this big savings and loan. They said, ‘We were just trying to help. We felt sorry for this guy. He is constituted, this poor American.’ Well, the fact that he kicked in a few million bucks for their campaign funds gave them a little incentive to have a little more interest in helping him than they would have had to help you or me were we in trouble. They just wouldn't have gone quite the length to help us. I don't see five of them lining up to go see somebody on my behalf—or yours either.

The point is that a lot of people are quick to try to help somebody when they think the guy can do a lot of good for them. God says pure religion is when you help somebody who's not in a position

to “make it worth your while”—the widow, the fatherless or those who are really in the least position to defend themselves. You are to visit them, to pay attention to them, to give them help. That’s one of the components of pure religion. Pure religion is service that is directed from a pure motive and is directed toward those who need it most and are least able to make it “worth your while.”

The other component is to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. That is a constant battle because if we’re not careful, bits and pieces kind of rub off on us. The need is to keep ourselves unspotted and unpolluted from the world around us. Those are important components of pure religion.

4) What is the relationship of faith and works?

Faith without works is dead. We show the depth and sincerity of what we believe by what we do. James 2:14-26 bring this out. Faith and works go together; they don’t contradict. We demonstrate our faith by our works. If we believe something, we are prepared to act on it. If we don’t act on it, then we obviously don’t believe it very much.

5) Explain James 3:1.

James 3:1, we have already commented on that (KJV), “...be not many masters,” The Greek word here is “*didaskaloi*.” That’s the word that’s translated “master” here which means “teachers.” Another word was a common title of respect. It meant “someone who owned property”; it is a totally different word, “*kurios*.” And the third word, “*kathegetes*,”—the one that Christ said, “don’t call anyone Master” (Matthew 23:10), has a spiritual connotation and was not to be used as a title—was a totally different word,

The specific words aren’t important. I mention them because you don’t even have to know Greek to be able to tell those words in the Greek language are totally dissimilar words. They are words that are totally different from one another even though they are all rendered by the same English word “master.” Sometimes the same Greek word is rendered by two or three English words; sometimes the same English word is used to render two or three different Greek words. It can sometimes be a little bit confusing if not realizing the distinctions.

6) What are the seven characteristics of Godly wisdom?

Let’s notice the seven components of Godly wisdom. This is James 3:17: (1) pure, (2)

peaceable, (3) gentle, (4) easy to be entreated, (5) full of mercy and good fruits, (6) without partiality and (7) without hypocrisy.

7) Why do we sometimes not receive from God what we ask?

James 4:3 tells us it is because we ask amiss. We ask in the wrong way or not from a proper perspective. That’s one reason why we sometimes don’t receive the answer we desire; we ask amiss.

8) To whom does James tell us that sin is imputed?

James 4:17, “Therefore to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” God imputes sin based on what we know. We are judged on the basis of what we do with what we know, and the more we know, the more we are accountable for.

9) To what does James compare life?

James 4:14 compares life to a vapor. It’s just a little trail of water vapor. That’s pretty insubstantial, isn’t it? That’s what comes out of your teakettle. James says that’s what life is like. It’s here and it’s gone. It goes by. It’s something you can’t hold on to. Ever try to hold on to water vapor, get a good hold on it and won’t let it go? Doesn’t work, does it? Life is that way. You can’t just grab hold of it and say you are just not going to turn it loose.

The point that James makes is our life is in God’s hands. God gave us our life, and none of us has any guarantee of how long it is going to be. We need to live our lives with the realization that our life is in God’s hands, that the plans we make are at God’s disposal and that we try to order our lives by recognizing God’s role and how temporary we are.

10) Does it really matter very much whether or not you use oaths?

James 5:12, “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgment.” He says not to swear. That is why we don’t swear, even in legal matters. We can simply “affirm” something rather than swearing an oath. The law recognizes that. James says don’t do that because when you swear, then in a sense, what you’re doing is you’re making a distinction. He says, ‘Let your “Yes” be “Yes” and your “No,” “No.”’ In other

words, say what you mean and mean what you say!

You make this big distinction, ‘Boy, this time I am really telling the truth. I’m swearing to all this stuff, and I’m really telling the truth this time.’ Well, what’s the implication of that? The implication is that you normally don’t tell the truth. But you stick your hand up, put your other one on the Bible and you’re really telling the truth this time. James said to just simply tell the truth. When you get any further than that, then you get into making distinctions as to whether you’re telling the truth or not. As a Christian, we should just tell the truth—period. There should be no need for a Christian to have to take some kind of an oath because we’re to be consistently telling the truth. If we say it, it is true.

11) What is God’s instruction to those who are sick?

God’s instruction to the sick is a familiar verse, one many of us memorized years ago when we first came into the Church.

James 5:14-15, “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick,”

This is one of the basic instructions in terms of anointing for illness and looking to God in terms of recognizing God as our Healer. One of the blessings and the benefits that God allows us as His people to partake of is the fact that we can have access to Him in the midst of our sicknesses and afflictions.

12) What kind of prayers really gets answers?

James 5:16, “...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” There are several components to prayer. We are to really put our heart into it. We are to be obeying God. That’s the kind of prayer that God really takes note of.

Hopefully, this has given you a little bit more insight and a little bit of an overview of the book of James. There is so much that is packed into the book of James. It is one of the most basic books of the New Testament in terms of practical day-to-day Christian living. It tells us the way that we should live our lives and conduct ourselves on a day-in, day-out basis. There is a very practical, basic approach towards applying the teachings of Jesus Christ in our own life. It’s

one that I think we can all profit from going back to again and again.

Next Bible study we will go through the books of 1 & 2 Peter; then we will have one more Bible study on this series. We will get into 1, 2, 3 John and Jude. That may seem like a lot to string together, but when you look at the fact that 2 and 3 John and Jude are all very short one-chapter books, you’re really not stringing that much together. 1 John is only five chapters. It’s a fairly short section. Basically, we have two more Bible studies in this brief series on the General Epistles. Hopefully those will be of help in terms of focusing in on some basic areas here in the Scriptures.

With that, we will be concluded this evening.