

THE BOOK OF JAMES

A Commentary by Dr. David A. DeWitt

Introduction

Read:

Galatians 1:19–2:14

Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19

Someone once said, “Paul emphasized faith, Peter emphasized hope, John emphasized love, Jude emphasized purity, and James emphasized conduct.”

James was probably written after the scattering of Acts 1, 4 and 11:19, since the group he addressed is scattered abroad. That scattering occurred about 34 A.D. Also, he probably writes to the dispersion before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, which took place about 49 A.D. because he does not mention the Jerusalem Council or assume its conclusion. So we put James somewhere in the late 40s, maybe 46, which makes it the first book of the New Testament written (Matthew and Mark were probably written in the 50s, Luke in the 60s, and John in the 70s).

Galatians 1:19 says that James was the Lord’s half-brother. There are four James in the New Testament, but the most likely one is the Lord’s brother because he assumes everyone knows who is. He simply gives his name. He writes as if he is someone with authority who would have the respect to give a lot of commands. (It’s interesting that James writes with authority but without a position of authority.)

In Galatians 2:9, 12, we seem to have the same James as in 1:19. In 2:12 we have men coming from James to Antioch, who seem to encourage two separate churches: a Jewish one and a Gentile one. This event took place around Acts 11:19-30, which is sometime after 41 A.D.

The scattering happened after Stephen’s martyrdom (Acts 11) and Barnabas being sent to Antioch and his recruitment of Paul. Galatians 2:12 gives us an indication of James’ thinking at that time. Apparently the sending of Paul to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews was seen by some as the forming of two churches, or two denominations, and that’s what Paul objected to in Galatians 2:11-14. James, in his epistle, is writing to that Jewish church before the revelation given to Paul in Ephesians 2:13-16 and 3:1-10, where Paul says that Christ broke down the barrier of the dividing wall between the Jews and the Gentiles.

Some people have denied James wrote the book because of its excellent Greek. But instead, it shows the high degree of literacy available in Palestine in the time of Christ and that James was highly educated, even though most of his education came from home. The Greek in the book indicates he probably had some formal education also, which may be why he was encouraged by the other apostles to be head of the church in Jerusalem.

Josephus tells us that James was martyred in 62 A.D. If that’s true, it was obviously written before that.

So putting all that together, we put the book in the late 40s.

Some have suggested that James addresses the Jewish Christians scattered to the East, that is, in Babylonian, Medo/Persia, and Mesopotamia. It’s possible, because the Medes and Mesopotamians were mentioned in Acts 2 as part of the large group that came to Christ. But the dispersion of Acts 8 and 11 does not mention anyone going to the Far East. So I think it is written to Jewish believers scattered wherever they are scattered but probably throughout Greece and the western churches.

The book is not addressed to anyone, any church, or any city. It is more like a lecture than a letter. It seems to be prepared for public reading. The tone of the book is clearly authoritative. There are 54 imperatives (command verbs) in the book. There are only 108 verses, and 54 of them have commands in them. Yet James never refers to a position of authority. As a matter of fact, he refers to himself as a brother. He never refers to himself as a pastor or a priest or by any other position of authority. Repeatedly in the book he talks to “brothers.”

When we look at the first verse, we see James calls himself a “bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus,” both are God, in other words.

He addresses the 12 tribes of the diaspora spread abroad. James sees the church as the true Israel of God. So does Paul in Romans 9:6-8 and Galatians 3:23-25, but there is a difference. James, probably written before the Jerusalem Council, is unaware of the revelation that Paul describes against separating the church.

So there are four things at the time of James’ writing of this book that should govern our understanding of the book:

- (1) James never addresses Gentile situations, only Jewish ones.
- (2) He does not yet have the revelation about the church in Galatians 3:23-25 that we are no longer under the law.
- (3) He does not deal with nor is he responding to Paul’s statement about justification by faith. He uses the words “saved” and “justification” in an Old Testament sense, and we’ll define that more specifically in chapter 2.
- (4) He points believers to the coming of Christ, for example, in 5:7-11 and their judgment by Christ at His coming, but he does not focus on heaven. It’s possible that heaven is never in James’ mind at all but rather the coming of Christ with His kingdom to follow, which due to Revelation 20 I call the millennial kingdom.

So James gives practical instructions to a Jewish church as to how they should establish the lordship of Christ here on earth as they await the soon return of the Lord to set up His kingdom. The judgment seat he is talking about is the judgment seat of Christ. The coming of Christ is an imminent return. In chapter 5 he says Christ is right at the door. So it cannot be the second coming because there are many signs for it. The judgment James talks about is for believers, which is the church. Therefore it is not the Great White Throne judgment but the judgment seat of Christ.

James says the reason we are to pursue the lordship of Christ on the earth is:

- (1) to be of value to each other during this diaspora and
- (2) it is good for you at the judgment seat of Christ

In other words, James is saying the same thing Paul is saying. What is important to understand is that James uses different words to describe the same thing Paul describes. It’s a very common mistake in much of evangelical writing to take the meaning of a word from one author and make it mean the same thing to another author. The meaning of a word has to come from the author, as determined by the context, not from the dictionary.

By my count, James has 12 things to say to the 12 tribes scattered abroad:

(1) 1:2-12 Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials

It is the Greek aorist middle, reflexive, tense—take it upon yourself to consider it all joy. “Various” are just things that come along in life that happen to you, not as a result of your sin or your plans. Bad stuff happens. When it does, consider it all joy, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, to approve or prove your faith. It produces steadfast endurance.

Let the endurance have its perfect result. “Perfect” is *telios* in Greek. It means “completion or maturity or perfection.” It’s the word for “end,” bring it to an end. Let endurance have its end result, that you may be complete, or whole, lacking in nothing.

You should have joy about encountering trials because it leads to your maturity or being whole.

The path from trials to completion is the path of wisdom, because if you lack it, you need to ask God, who gives “generously” and without reservation, without making a deal, without any negative side effects.

In verse 6, you have to ask without doubting. The word for “doubting” is a combination of two words: “on account of” and “judging.” So doubting is according to judgment. You are not to act according to judgment. You can’t trust God and judge God at the same time. If you are a judge of God, then God is on trial. For example, if you have a bad marriage, and you ask God for wisdom, and God says not to get a divorce in His Word, but instead of trusting God’s Word you become a judge of God’s Word and reject it, then don’t ask for God’s wisdom. You can’t have faith in God’s Word and judge it at the same time.

The one who judges is like the wave of the sea which doesn’t go anywhere but is tossed by the wind. If God is on trial, then we are like a ship without a rudder or compass, there is no way to know where to go, you just drift back and forth. That man should not expect anything from the Lord because he is doubled minded and unstable.

Verse 9 says, “Let not boast the man of humble (non-proud) circumstances.” Another command. A humble man should glory in his position because it is high. If you are in a humble position, that’s good, it is really a high position. See Christ’s words in Luke 14:11. Christ expected people to want to be exalted, but the right way to accomplish this exultation is to have God do it for you. When you try to exalt yourself, you trust in yourself and your own abilities. When you humble yourself, you trust God to exalt you in His time.

Humility is never an end in itself, it is a means to an end. Like happiness, you can’t get it by pursuing it. God wants us to be exalted, but He wants us to do it His way not our way.

The brother of humble circumstances should glory in his humble position. Obviously he expects us to want a high position, and he encourages us to seek that high position, but he also instructs us how to get that high position the right way, and that is through personal humility and allowing God to assign you that high position. Such a high position is a better high position because, unlike the proud man, it doesn’t fade away.

James is saying that the brother who is tested by the trials of verses 2-3, and asks for the wisdom of verse 5, without the doubting of verse 6, shall receive the crown of verse 12, through the path of humbling himself instead of developing a high position for himself because the man who pursues his own high position will fade away. But the one whom God puts in a high position shall receive a crown of life. A crown in the ancient world represented royalty, or victory (such as in athletic games), or celebrations of joy (such as weddings or feasts). Because of his emphasis in chapter 5:7-11, James is probably referring to a crown given by Christ at His coming.

(2) 1:13-18 Don’t be tempted by your own lusts

James now continues the idea but in the other direction. Let no one when he is tempted say he is being tempted by God because God cannot be tempted by evil (by definition) and He doesn’t tempt anyone. So how could Jesus be tempted? Because He lived in the same world of various trials like we do. How could He not succumb to those temptations? Because He was God. His desires were for righteousness, not sin.

There is another interesting thing here. The word “tempted” in verse 13 is the same word as “trials” in verse 2. Now we know that he means when he says you encounter various temptations. So in verse 2-3 he doesn’t just mean hardships but also when you encounter various temptations toward sex, money, gossip—temptations to sin, etc., not just trials. Why is it good that we encounter temptation? Because we know it doesn’t come from God. The world, Satan, our sin nature all tempt us. Yet when we encounter these various temptations, we are to consider it all joy. Obviously they are of God in the sense that they are of God’s sovereign plan, although the source of temptation is the world and not God.

Speculation: I think it is the same reason God set up a suffering world. To prove that God can overcome evil. Why is that a good idea? Because potential evil which becomes actual and is dealt with is better than potential evil that does not become actual and is not dealt with. Example: You’ve been invited to fly around the world in an airplane. There are two possible airplanes you can choose from. Both are new, but one has been taken up by the test pilot, been put through maneuvers, and everything that could go wrong has been tested, it does well under turbulent air, and it works fine. The other airplane has just rolled off the assembly line. It should be just as good as the other one, but it’s never been tested. Which airplane would you rather fly around the world in?

When this is all over and we are in the New Jerusalem and the potential evil has been actual and God has dealt with it, we and the angels can say more about God than we could say before. God isn't any better than He was before, but we can say more about Him. When we encounter these trials, it tests our faith and endurance, so that we can become perfect, lacking in nothing.

So rather than avoid them, we should thank God for them. The problem is, we can go the other way and apply the sin nature to them, and it will lead to sin and death. An old Englishman once said, "I have found this out about sin: it is first startling, then pleasing, then easy, then delightful, then frequent, then habitual, then obstinate, then destructive, and then it brings forth death."

Do not be deceived. A good principle for Christians today. A problem in the church today is we are easily deceived.

Every perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of lights (like sun, moon, and stars, that don't change). Out of that unchangingness, He brought us forth by the Word of truth. In other words, James' theory of how we got here is exactly the opposite of the evolutionists. The evolutionists say we got here through an everchanging process that is never the same. James says we got here from a God who is always the same.

Inward motivation, from God's internal character. It's used of God's eternal plan in Hebrews 6:17. From the depth of your will. James uses it again in 4:4 of those wishing to be a friend of the world.

The word "brought us forth" is the word for "pregnant." James also used it in 1:15 when he said sin brings forth death

(3) 1:19-27 Be yourselves doers of the Word

Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Be quick to hear the Word (wisdom) of God he talked about in the beginning of the chapter.

For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Take it upon yourself to put away (to place it away from you):

- dirt, filth, vulgarity, moral uncleanness (Revelation 22:11)
- the abundance of evil

Take it upon yourself to receive the implanted Word. You didn't implant the Word, but you are to receive the Word that has been implanted.

The attitude in which we are to receive it is "gentleness" or "submission" to an inner strength placed inside of you by God, that is, the Word of God. Aristotle said, "This word [gentleness] describes getting angry at the right time, in the right amount, and for the right reason." It's a condition of the mind and disposition which expresses a balance of power and gentleness. It's not the idea of weakness but the idea of a controlled disposition, an inner strength which does not have to be expressed in some sort of boisterous, loud way, but rather with a calm inner strength. That's the attitude in which we are to receive the implanted Word.

This implanted Word has the power to save your soul. "Power" is where we get the English word "dynamite."

"to save your soul." Soter is the Greek word for "save." It means "to deliver from problems." It is the Old Testament usage of the word, which is the mentality James brings to the word: Isaiah 59:1-2; Psalm 59:1; 69:1-4; 70:1-2; and 79:8-11. This is what David prays when he asks God to save him from his enemies.

So James is saying that the implanted Word is able to deliver your life from a life of uselessness and to deliver you to reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

"Saved" to James does not have to do with going to heaven. If you read Paul's usage of the word "saved" into this passage, you'll come up with heresy because the implanted Word cannot "save" your soul in the sense of going to heaven. Your soul is saved in the Pauline sense by receiving Christ as your Savior not by receiving the implanted

Word. Here we have the Word already implanted in the believer (not in the unbeliever), and James says that when you take it upon yourself to receive this Word, with an attitude of submission, that Word will deliver you from being useless on earth and give you rewards at the judgment seat of Christ.

Verse 22—Prove yourselves to be doers of the Word, not hearers who delude themselves. The problem with a hearer is that they tend to delude themselves. The word is translated “deceived” or “delude” or “to think wrongly.”

He is like a man who looks at his face in the mirror and then goes away, having forgotten what he’s seen. If I look in the mirror and think, “My hair needs to be combed,” but I don’t comb it and walk away, I forget about it. That’s what happens when you hear the Word and don’t do anything about it. It’s the problem of developing the habit of going to Bible studies, listening to tapes, sermons, etc. regularly. It’s very easy to become a hearer, and when you leave, you’re deceived because you think you’ve done something about it, and you really haven’t. As you sit there, you agree that what was said is right, but as soon as you leave, you forget all about it.

Verse 25—But the one who looks intently— “to bend forward.” To bend over and look at something closely. It’s used for Mary Magdalene who stooped over to look if Jesus was in the tomb (John 20:5, 11). Don’t be just a hearer but one who bends over, like the scribes bending over the books.

...and abides by it, this one is blessed in what he does.

If anyone considers himself to be religious, very formal word for religion, used by the Jews for a regular attender at the synagogue, but does not bridle the tongue (referring to the slow to speak in verse 19), then he is deceiving his own heart, and his religion is worthless.

Here is what true religion is, i.e., in the sight of God the Father as opposed to the true religion in the sight of those in the synagogue:

- (1) Visit (care or bring help, it’s the word for bishop or overseer, i.e. to oversee them) orphans and widows in their distress (not generally every widow, just those in distress)—it’s an example of being a doer of the Word. Always ask what are the priorities and what are the borders of our giving. For example, a widow who is a faithful believer would have priority over an unbeliever.
- (2) Keep yourself unstained by the world.

(4) 2:1-12 Do not practice personal favoritism

Do not hold our faith with an attitude of personal favoritism, to favor certain characteristics like rank, wealth, etc., Literally it means “to lift our face.” He gives an example of a man with a gold ring coming into your assembly (word for “synagogue,” either the church met in a synagogue or their meeting was considered a synagogue, which means “assembly”—in chapter 5 he calls “them” a “church”—that is, the meeting he calls a synagogue and them he calls a church), and someone else in dirty (filthy, foul, unclean) clothes comes in and you pay special attention to the one wearing fine clothes and tell him to sit in the good place and you say to the poor man to stand or sit at a footstool, then you’ve made a distinction among yourselves with evil motives. On the elder board of your church, are there as many poor people as rich people? In parties and social activities, are there poor people? Does your church have a dress code—not written, it is just understood. If you are making distinctions among yourselves on outward appearances based on wealth, you are being judges with evil motives. What would that motive be and why would it be evil? He’s talking about favoring them in the gathering of believers. Why is that evil? The motive is for social or financial gain in our religious meeting. The real result is so the rich and influential will honor our organization. The reason that is evil is:

- (1) it puts the institution over the individual
- (2) it puts the earthly over the heavenly
- (3) it puts the short-term over the long-term

He says in verse 5 that God didn’t do that. He chose the poor of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom because the poor are not as likely to have their values tied to this world. All true believers, by definition, are poor in this world because they place no value on the riches of this world, whether they have them or not. Being poor is a mindset, an attitude, as well as possessions.

Throughout history the rich usually got rich by dishonest means, therefore, they oppress others. They are also the ones who blaspheme the name of God. If you value the law, you'll love your neighbor as yourself. If you show partiality, you'll be convicted.

The thing about the law, though, is if you break one part of it, you're guilty of breaking it all. He illustrates it with adultery and murder. It's an interesting observation of the early Jewish thinking of the Law. The Mosaic Law gives us liberty, in the same way it did for David in Psalm 119, it gave you the true boundaries, which gave you liberty within those boundaries (not talking about grace).

Verse 12 is a transition to the next section.

(5) 2:13-26 Don't have faith without works

Verse 13—Judgment will be merciless to the one who does not show mercy (such as the poor man, the widow, and the orphan). The context is one of judgment. It is a judgment for believers, addressed in verse 14 to "the brethren." When you show mercy to others, mercy is what obtains rewards for you at the judgment seat of Christ. None of your actions are totally good, they are mixed with evil. But God has chosen to allow you to be rewarded anyway, because of His mercy. God will mercifully reward your acts of mercy. For example, what use (profit) is it if you say you have faith but have no works? We are not here dealing with attaining eternal life. He's talking to the brethren who already have eternal life. But rather we are being delivered at the judgment of Christ (verse 13) and stressed again in 5:7-12. Faith without works is useless for facing a rewards' judgment. It has no profit.

There's no way to read Paul's use of the word "saved" back into this passage without having heresy. Saved is defined in 1:21, to deliver from uselessness. Paul says you are not saved by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Paul uses the word "saved" metaphorically for eternal life. James uses the word in its more normal sense, as it was used in the Old Testament. [Some commentaries make a point that he "says" he's saved, so they say he is not really saved. But that is because they are reading Paul's definition of "saved" into the passage. But Paul has not yet even written, so we must take the Old Testament definition of "saved."]

If a brother is without clothing or daily food, and one says to him to go in peace, be warm, and be filled, and you don't give him what is necessary for his body, what "profit" is it? Do all the good you can, for everyone you can, every time you can. The one you help, is the one like in the Good Samaritan story, who is in your path and is in need. Love is doing the best good for the person. Love may be to encourage him to get a job instead of giving to him.

So faith without works is dead, i.e., useless for rewards for believers at the judgment seat of Christ. James is expressing Pauline theology, but he's not using Paul's words (especially the word "saved"). Get your theology from the author in the context rather than from the dictionary definition of the words. The way the words are used varies from author to author. James is talking to believers not how to become a believer.

But, someone may say you have faith and I have works, show me your faith without works. How can you do that? I will show you my faith by my works. There is always a connection between faith and works. Works declare the nature, depth, and content of your faith. Everybody's faith, which is unseen, is declared by their works, which are seen. That would be true whether you are a Buddhist, etc.

Verse 19—You believe God is one. So what? So do the demons. Belief that is what the demons do. Believe in is what the Christians do. Believe that requires no works. Believe in will be reflected in my works.

So faith without works is barren (like a woman who cannot have children).

Two examples:

Abraham, our father, was justified by works when he offered up Isaac on the altar. James uses "justified" in a very different way than Paul does. He uses the word "justified" for an act Abraham did over 30 years after Abraham was declared to have faith. If we used Paul's definition of "justified," we'd use Genesis 15:6. But the event James

refers to took place over 30 years later in Genesis 22. James says that Abraham was justified by works. His idea of justified is that Abraham's showed or proved his righteousness. You couldn't "see" his faith in Genesis 15:6 but you could "see" it in Genesis 22. So Abraham was justified, not in Paul's sense of declaring right, but in James' sense of demonstrating it. In verse 22, it says faith was working together with his works. You cannot read Paul's meaning into this sentence. In this case, faith and works work together, and as a result of the works, faith was "perfected," the same word as in chapter 1—joy ... trials ... perfected. Then the Scripture was fulfilled that Abraham believed God (Genesis 15:6), and he was called a friend of God (Genesis 22). Man is justified (demonstrated to be right) by works and not by faith alone.

Rahab is the second example. She demonstrated she was righteous by saving the Jewish spies. In her case, she made a commitment which shaped her future. As soon as she protected those spies, she was committed to Israel and not to Jericho. It demonstrated her faith in the God of Israel.

So James concludes that just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.

Justification by works:

- (1) From 2:14, there is no profit, i.e., no value or use, in claiming to have faith. It doesn't deliver you or anyone else from anything.
- (2) From 14-17, there is no such thing as faith without works, i.e., sincere faith will be demonstrated by works, no matter what the faith is in. By their fruits you shall know them (bad faith will show bad works, also).
- (3) 2:18, there is no such thing as works without faith in something. So the reverse of #2 is also true. Sincere works always come from sincere faith.
- (4) 2:19, there is a difference between "faith that" and "faith in." There is a difference between "faith that" something exists and "faith in" something that exists. "Faith that" can exist without works, as it does for the demons. Example: I have faith that Karl Marx started Communism, but I don't have faith in Karl Marx.
- (5) 2:20-21 (Abraham example) faith is developed, perfected, or strengthened by works. Your works develop your faith.
- (6) 2:25 (Rahab example) faith is focused by works. Works define the focus of your faith when they involve irrevocable decisions that define your future.

	Save	Justify
Paul	To deliver from sin	To declare righteous
James	To deliver from uselessness	To demonstrate (show or prove) righteousness

(6) 3:1-12 Control the tongue

Let not many of you become teachers because you incur a stricter judgment. It's not a punishment, it's a judgment (evaluation for rewards is stricter). "Teacher" occurs 58 times in the New Testament, 41 of these refer to Christ. There were teachers in the early church. Acts 13:1 and Ephesians 4:11 speak of people who are special gifts to the church as teachers. Teaching is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Teachers are listed third behind apostles and prophets in 1 Corinthians 12:28-29. Hebrews 5:12 implies that we all should be teachers as part of our maturity.

Teaching is:

- (1) a big part of the example Christ left for us
- (2) part of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20
- (3) part of our maturity (Hebrews 5:12)
- (4) a gift in the church (1 Corinthians 12:28-29 and Ephesians 4:11)

So why would he say not let many of you become teachers? Because of the dangers of the tongue and the dangers from the misuse of it.

The root form is the same for the noun and verb form, but they have a bit of a different emphasis. The verb form seems to have a less formal sense of an intent to influence the understanding of someone. The noun form, which is used here, is the more formal sense of an official teacher (from the lexicon), a more formal position of a teacher, whereas the commands of teaching in discipleship as in Matthew 28 and in 2 Timothy 2:2 is the less formal verb form.

James uses it to introduce his discussion about the tongue.

James' use of the word "judgment" is different than Paul's. James uses *krisis*, which is the normal common word for judgment. Paul began to use the word *bema* for the judgment seat of Christ because the *bema* seat was the place the court met in all the Greek cities. But James is writing to Jews, himself not travelling to these Greek cities. So James uses the word *krisis* to describe the judgment seat of Christ because that is the common word to him for a judgment seat. So don't read Paul's use of *krisis* into James' use of the word. Look at the context.

We all stumble in many ways. There is nothing like the tongue.

- (1) verses 1-4, the tongue is directive, it directs your life. He gives two examples: like a bridle on a horse and a rudder on a ship.
- (2) verses 5-6, the tongue is destructive, like a flame starting a forest fire.
- (3) verses 7-8, the tongue is uncontrollable, unlike the animals which can be controlled.
- (4) verses 9-12, the tongue is inconsistent, unlike four examples of contrast: a fresh water fountain, a fig tree, a vine, and salt or fresh water.

In summary, the tongue:

- (1) controls and
- (2) directs

but it cannot be:

- (3) controlled or
- (4) directed

James offers no solution to this problem except let not many of you be teachers. The implied solution is that if you are aware of it, not naive about it, and always watching it, you may be able to keep it in check. But that is speculation not stated in the text. It could be the solution is the next section, 3:13-18, pursue godly wisdom.

(7) 3:13-18 Pursue godly wisdom

Those who are wise, show it by your good behavior or conduct (the mode of life or your actions). It's used in Galatians 3:13 of Paul's former conduct. 1 Timothy 4:12, be an example of behavior and conduct. In Hebrews 13, he says to remember the conduct of your leaders.

Show your wisdom and knowledge by your conduct and deeds instead of tongue, in the gentleness controlled strength (meekness) of wisdom.

But if you have jealousy and selfish ambition (competition) in your heart, you are lying against the truth. "Competition" is used for people who hire themselves out for money, but usually in a bad sense, such as a mercenary, someone hiring themselves out for no good. It was also used for taking public office in the Greek world. Paul uses it in Philippians 1:16 and 2:3 of those who are peaching Christ out of bad motives (competition).

This kind of wisdom is earthly, natural, and demonic. It does not come down from above. Godly wisdom teaches that you get your profit from God. Earthly wisdom says you get it from others. Worldly wisdom leads to jealousy and selfish ambition.

The characteristics of wisdom from above: pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, without wavering and hypocrisy,

etc.

verse 18, whatever you sow, that's what you reap (also in Galatians 6).

(8) 4:1-12 Do not pursue friendship with the world

The source of your quarrels is your pleasures. The effect of a pleasure ethic will always be quarrels. That's why the Greeks concluded that the gods on Mount Olympus always quarreled because the Greeks had a pleasure-oriented society. If you get married because of the pleasure of romance and you pursue pleasure in marriage, you will have conflict and quarrels. Any place where you pursue pleasure, you will have quarrels. If you want pleasure from church, or from your families, or from your car, you will have quarrels.

God won't participate in your pleasure ethic.

You lust and commit murder, i.e. as Christ said in Sermon on Mount, they are angry with one another. In other words, you are envious and cannot obtain, so you quarrel. Then you bring God into it. But your motive is to spend it on your pleasures. Prayer won't help because God won't give you what will cause quarrels. So you become friends with the world because the world will give you pleasure, so you become an adulterer to God and become a friend of the world. You don't focus on the righteousness of God.

Verse 5, God does not want you to have the pleasures from the association of the world. He jealousy desires your spiritual ability to choose righteousness rather than the world. But God gives a greater grace that He Himself will elevate the humble. He quotes "God is opposed to the proud (summary of verses 1-4) but gives grace to the humble (summary of verses 5-10)." Pride is never ever good at any time for any reason. It's not good in sports, in business, in family, or in government. If you are proud of your children or your business or your country, God is opposed to you. Pride assumes you have achieved it. Humility assumes that it is a gift from God. Every hero of the Bible was humble (see Isaiah 66:1-2).

Verses 7-11, the cure of worldly people. There are 11 commands:

- (1) submit to God, the cure for conflict is vertical not horizontal.
- (2) resist the devil (evil, in contrast to #1)
- (3) verse 8, draw near to God
- (4) cleanse your hands
- (5) purify your hearts
- (6) verse 9, be miserable
- (7) mourn
- (8) weep
- (9) let your laughter be turned to mourning
- (10) verse 10, humble yourself and God will exalt you
- (11) verse 11, don't speak against another brother

Because you are to be a doer of the law, not a judge of it. James is not talking about not speaking out against sin, but speaking against our brother contrary to the law, such things as gossip, that which leads to divisions and factions. Also, it would include judging our brother according to legalism. The legalist is someone who adds to the law of God:

- (1) he imposes it on others, judging others by the laws he has added to God's
- (2) he determines his own righteousness before God based on his own laws

(9) 4:13—5:6 Do not set a goal to get rich

The problem with setting this goal is that we are like a vapor which passes away. Instead, we should say if it is in the sovereignty of God then it will happen, because if we say, "If the Lord wills it," it is coming from an attitude of humility. If it comes from our boasting, it is coming from pride. If we say "if the Lord wills" we will be rich, then God responds to it with His grace. If we boast that we are going to get rich based on our ability, then it gets God's

opposition because He is opposed to the proud.

Verse 17, an additional sin. If you know the right thing to do and don't do it, it's sin (in addition to doing wrong things).

5:1, the rich are to be miserable because of the miseries which are coming their way.

(1) riches are temporary (verses 2-3)

(2) the rich will be judged (verses 4-6)

The problem with riches is that they are like a drug, they keep you from realizing how poor you are. In Revelation 3:17-18 Jesus says to the church, you think you are rich, but you are really poor and blind. Buy riches from Christ. If you have a lot of money and can buy anything you want, you can go through life and not realize your true condition of being poor before God.

(10) 5:7-12 Be patient (or look for) for the coming of the Lord

The word is porousia, which is usually the second coming of Christ. But James is not talking about the second coming. In verse 9 he says it is right at the door, imminent, therefore it has to be the rapture because there are many signs which precede the second coming. For believers the judge for rewards is right at the door (1 Thesalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15). That is how the church is to live. It's not a statement about time but about attitude. Live like Jesus will come at any moment.

Verse 12, before or above all, don't swear, i.e., the taking of an oath, reflecting Christ's teaching of Matthew 5:34-37. This is a form of idolatry. This does not mean in court. It's not about making a solemn or serious statement, like in Romans 1:9, where Paul says, "For God is my witness..." For example, it was a Jewish custom to take oaths based on all kinds of things (such as "I swear on my mother's grave...") as if the thing had mystical or spiritual value. It's a form of idolatry, giving authority to someone or something other than truth and God. Jesus said more than James said. Jesus said not to take any oaths at all.

(11) 5:13-18 The effective prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much

Verse 16 is the point of the section.

If you are suffering ... pray

If you are cheerful ... sing

Verse 14, if anyone is weak (a very general word for weakness, not specifically "sick").

Let him call the elders of the church, ekklesia not synagogae

Let then pray over him and anoint with a ceremonial oil in the name of the Lord.

Verse 15, vow (not prayer) of faith, or the promise of faith, will heal (save, deliver) the sick (different word than "weak" of verse 14). The Lord will raise him up from his sickness. If the sickness is due to sin, then that sin will be forgiven, and he'll be delivered from the consequences of that sin, that is, the sickness. If you confess sin to one another (not sin against them but the sin against God that is causing the sickness), then we can pray for one another for healing (being cured of anything, not necessarily physical healing). Matthew 13:15 and John 12:40 also use this word for "healing."

The strong request of a righteous one is effective. Example of Elijah for rain.

(12) 5:19-20 Turn a sinner from the error of his ways

Verse 19, if anyone is "wandering" from the truth—from planeo, the Greeks saw the planets as wandering bodies

compared to the stars which didn't move. If anyone wanders from the truth, and you turn such a one from that error (wandering), you will save (deliver) him from death and protect (cover or hide or "wrap around" like the bark on a tree) a multitude of sins (it may be the sickness of the previous section) and will keep the sin from destroying him so he will be rewarded. So if you help turn your brother from wandering from the truth, you help him get rewards in heaven.

James does not talk about eternal life anywhere.
"Soul" means "the person."