

JAMES CHAPTER ONE

I. Greeting (1:1)—see introductory notes

II. The Testing of Faith (1:2-18)

A. Trials Produce Perfection (1:2-11)

1. Through the development of perseverance (1:2-4)

1:2-4—2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, **3** knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. **5** And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing. (NASB)

1:2-4—2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. **5** Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (NIV)

1:2-4—2—My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; **3** Knowing [this], that the trying of your faith worketh patience. **4** But let patience have [her] perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. (KJV)

a. Main idea

Rejoice when you face trials—because this process will make you what God wants you to be (i.e. complete).

b. Train of thought

Rejoice when you face **trials**—because **trials** build **perseverance**—and **perseverance** makes you **complete**

c. Key words and phrase

1. consider it all joy

a. ‘consider it’ (hegeomai)

1. Has two meanings: (1) to lead, to rule, to go before; (2) to think, suppose, esteem, consider

2. Here it is the second meaning

3. But it is more than just ‘think’

a. Instead—consider this a matter of first importance

b. Think about this thing as being a first and essential principle

c. Put this thought first—in the forefront—of your mind—let it rule your mind

b. ‘all’ (pas)

1. Could mean to have ‘all’ the joy possible—be completely joyful. Hence ‘pure joy’ (NIV)

2. Or it could mean—consider each all the *trials* you face to be a joy

c. 'joy' (chara)

1. This is the basic NT Greek word for 'joy'—also means 'gladness'

2. The same word used in

Lk 2:10—The angels brought: good tidings of great joy

Lk 5:10—There is joy in heaven when one sinner repents

Jn 15:11—These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you so that your joy may be made full

Gal 5:22—Joy—is part of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace . . .

3. The reason for the joy here is—that we will become complete—as God created us to be

4. Notice the contrast with **4:9**—the only other place 'joy' is used in James

a. In **1:2**—one reason for our joy is this: we will grow in wisdom (see vv 5-8)

b. In **1:2-11**—one result of this wisdom is—we will not be double-minded—see **v8**

c. But in chapter 4—James deals with a worldly mindset

1. He tells us to submit to God and resist the devil—come to God with a repentant attitude

2. To those who are sinners and double-minded he says:

4:9—*Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom*

2. encounter many/various trials

a. 'encounter' (peripipto) = to fall (to the ground) or descend (as from high to low position), to fail, in such a way as to be surrounded

1. Not just to meet or encounter something bad or difficult—not just bumping into it

2. But the trial affects you personally—it brings you down or low—with a sense of being trapped

3. The implication—such 'encounters' can hurt you badly or destroy you—two examples:

a. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan—the robbed man 'fell among thieves'—**Lk 10:30**

b. When Paul was shipwrecked off Malta—the ship 'struck' a reef where the seas met—**Acts 27:41**

b. 'many/various' (poikilos) = various colors, various sort, variegated

These trials/temptations come in many different types—a rainbow variety of trials

c. 'trials/temptations' (peirasmos) = experiment, attempt, trial to prove something—4 possible meanings

1. Trial—to show the strength of something

For example—when God tried Abraham with His command to sacrifice Isaac—read Ge 22:1

2. Temptation coming from external source

3. Temptation coming from within ones self

4. Adversity, affliction, trouble—coming from or allowed by God—to test/prove character

Probably this is the main meaning here (see 6 below—and verse 3 on ‘testing/trying’)

5. When humans ‘test’ or ‘tempt’ God—in rebellion

For example—Lk 4:13—when the devil had finished tempting Him, he left Him for a season

6. The key to knowing which interpretation: look at ‘**trying/testing** of your faith’ (below—v 3)

3. knowing (ginosko)

a. To have intimate knowledge—to understand (from experience)—not to have just head knowledge

b. Sometimes used to show certainty from personal experience—as in John 17

- v3—*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God*
- v7—*[Those you have given me] know that everything You have given Me comes from You*
- v8—*They knew with certainty that I came from you*
- v23—*I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*
- v25—*Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.*

4. testing/trying (of your faith)

a. Testing/trying (dokimion) = the proving—the testing of something, as in a furnace or crucible

b. This is the word used in I Pe 1:7

- The testing (dokimion) of your faith—as gold is melted in the furnace (but perishes)
- Though it is tried (dokimazo) by fire

c. The verb form (dokimazo) is used in the following contexts:

- Let everyone examine/test himself—before taking the Lord’s Supper—**I Cor 11:28**
- Test/prove all things—hold fast to that which is good—**I Th 5:21**
- Deacons should be proved—then found blameless—**I Tim 3:10**
- Do not believe every spirit—test the spirits to make sure they are from God—**I Jn 4:1**

d. This suggests that ‘trials’ in v2 (above)—should be the proving/testing of someone by adversity

5. produces (katergazomai) endurance

a. produces = not just to labor/work (ergazomai)—but to make something of that work

1. To achieve—accomplish
2. Not just activity—but productivity
3. Notice—**v21**—the word is used in opposite context:

- The wrath of man **does not produce** the righteousness of God

4. So trials **do produce** endurance—but wrath **does not produce** righteousness

- b. endurance (hupomonā)—sometimes translated patience—but here it means more than this

1. More than just a passive kind of patience
2. Constancy—steadfastness—resilience

- When a person cannot be diverted from his intended purpose
- When a person cannot be side-tracked from loyalty to faith and piety
- Regardless of the trials and sufferings

3. Pivotal step in the development of **hope**—seen in similar passage in Romans 5

our Rom 5:2b-4—and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance [endurance], and perseverance [endurance], proven character; and proven character, hope.

6. perfect result—(teleios ergon) = perfect **work**

- a. the ‘work’ = ergon—can mean the product of labor—or the deed that accomplishes something

1. The **product** made by art, industry or the mine

- a. Like a ‘work’ of art

Ph 1:6—He who had begun a good **work** in you will perform it until the day of Christ

- b. Like a vocation

I Tim 3:1—If a man desires the office of bishop, he desires a good **work**

II Tim 4:5—Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill our ministry

2. The **deed** or act that accomplishes something—the thing done

- a. For good purposes

1. True disciples who let their light shine

So men may see their good **deeds** and praise the Father—**Mt 5:16**

2. The woman anointing Jesus—at Bethany (Simon the Leper’s house)

She has done a good **work** to Me (Jesus)—**Mk 14:6**

- b. For self-serving purposes or evil—Pharisees or the devil

1. Pharisees perform **deeds** to be noticed by men—**Mt 23:5**
2. The Son of Man was revealed in order to destroy the **works** of the devil—**I Jn 3:8**
- c. Either good or bad—we have a choice—**John 3**
 - Men loved darkness instead of light because their **deeds** were evil—**v 19**
 - Men who do evil hate the light and do not want their **deeds** exposed—**v 20**
 - Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so it may be seen plainly that **what they have done** has been done through God
3. Parallel passage to this one—what the Scripture produces in us (II Tim 3:16)

[the Bible is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness . . .]

II Tim 3:17—So that the man of God may be **perfect**, thoroughly equipped for every good **work**
4. This word—**work**—is used **12 times**—in just 4 chapters
- b. “perfect” [work] = teleios—from ‘telos’ (end)—like a telescope
 1. Meanings
 - To be finished—brought to an end (as in time)
 - To be complete—everything necessary is present
 - To be perfect—according to design—fully what it is intended to be
 - To be mature—full grown
 2. Usage in James—5 times
 - 1:4—here—twice
 - 1:17—every good and **perfect** gift comes from above
 - 1:25—whoever looks into the **perfect** law of liberty will be blessed in what he does
 - 3:2—whoever does not stumble in what he says is **perfect**, able to bridle the whole body
 3. Scriptural examples of completeness
 - Be **perfect** as your heavenly Father is **perfect**—**Mt 5:48**
 - When the **perfect** has come, that which is in part shall be done away with—**I Cor 13:10**
 4. Scriptural parallels to this passage
 - a. Giving of gifts for equipping of the saints to build up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-12)
 - o **Eph 4:13**—to attain the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a **mature** person, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.
 - b. As many of us as are **perfect**, be like-minded (as Christ—humble and set on heavenly not earthly things)—**Eph 4:13**
 - c. [Do not be immature]—Strong meat belongs to those who are mature—those who by reason can exercise their sense to discern good from evil—**Heb 5:14**

c. Perseverance producing a mature work = producing a mature work within us

1. Like a great work of art—completely finished according to the artist’s purpose
2. Like mature fruit—not green—but ripe

It is one thing to have the fruit of the Spirit—it is another thing for it to be mature fruit!

7. “so that we may be perfect and complete—lacking nothing”

a. Perfect (teleios—again) and complete (holoklēros)

1. Complete = ‘holo’ (wholly, entirely) + ‘klēros’ (an allotted portion)
 - a. Therefore: all the allotted portions put together in a whole
 - b. **Example:** like a jigsaw puzzle without any missing pieces
2. It can also mean **without defect—without blemish!**

3. Both ideas (all the pieces—and without blemish) come together in the following verse:

[The following verse is the only other place *holoklēros* is used in the NT]

I Th 5:23—*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved **complete**, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

b. lacking (leipo) nothing (en mēdeis)

- a. Lacking—‘leipo’—destitute—failing—being inferior to
- b. This is used twice elsewhere in James

Jas 1:5—If any of you **lacks** wisdom—let him ask God

Jas 2:15—If a brother or sister is naked or **destitute** of daily food

8. **Contrast** between being ‘perfect’ and being ‘destitute’

a. See the two accounts of the Rich Young Ruler—**Mt 19** and **Lk 18**

b. In **Lk 18:22**—Jesus emphasized his destitution—what he lacks (leipo)

Now when Jesus heard these things, he said to him, yet you lack one thing: sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.

c. In **Mt 19:21**—Jesus emphasized his potential—the completeness (teleios) he could realize

Jesus said to him. If you will be perfect, go sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.

9. Implications of the need to become perfect and complete

a. Though completely justified and sanctified at the time of salvation—we still have much room to grow

- b. Analogy: are like seed that has been planted—we must grow to bring forth full fruit
- c. In which ways must we grow?

1. In producing fruit—**Jn 15** and **Gal 5**

- a. Fruit of the Spirit—Gal 5:22-23
- b. Reproducing—[making more disciples]—Jn 15:5,8

2. In Christian maturity

a. Examples where the Bible speaks about Christian immaturity

- 1. I Cor 3:1-3—not ‘spiritual men’ but ‘infants in Christ—who still drink milk and do not eat solid food—who are ‘fleshly’ and walking like ‘mere men’
- 2. Heb 5:11-14—dull of hearing—needing milk instead of solid food—infants, not mature

b. Maturity

- 1. **Heb 6:1**—Going beyond the elementary things of faith—we press on to maturity (teleiōtēs)
- 2. **Eph 4:13**—the gifts are given so that we can build up the body of Christ—so that we all attain the unity of faith, the knowledge of the Son of God, to a **mature** man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.
- 3. **I Cor 2:6**—Paul speaks **wisdom** to those who are **mature**—a wisdom not of this age nor of rulers of this age, but God’s wisdom—in a mystery—a hidden wisdom

3. Transitional ideas

- a. We do need to lack anything—God wants us to be completely mature
- b. The need for wisdom—for those who are mature

For those who are mature—or will become mature
They must be able to understand words of wisdom
They must have wisdom to understand the things of God

II. The Testing of Faith (1:2-18)

A. Trials Produce Perfection (1:2-11)

2. Through growth in wisdom (1:5-8-4)

KJV

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

NIV

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

NASB

5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

a. If any of you lack wisdom

1. “lack” = ‘leipo’—the same word used in v4—‘lacking nothing’

2. “wisdom” = ‘sophia’—the main word for wisdom in the NT—also the Greek work in the Septuagint

a. In Greek culture

1. One of the primary goals of Greek philosophers—permeated Plato’s writings

2. ‘Philosophy’ = love of wisdom—philos + sophia

b. In the Old Testament and Jewish culture

1. A main theme of the ‘wisdom’ literature—Psalms, Proverbs, Song, and Ecclesiastes

2. Philo—equated ‘sophia’ with the ‘logos’ of Plato and the Stoics

c. New Testament

1. The Logos—Gospel of John—is the personification of this wisdom—the Word of God

2. Distinguishes between types of wisdom

a. Paul’s two paradigms

1. The wisdom of the world—vs—godly wisdom—**I Cor 1:18-25**

- **v19**—I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the cleverness of the clever (Is 29:14)
- **v20**—God has made foolish the wisdom of the world

- v21—the world in its wisdom did not come to know God
 - v25—the foolishness of God is wiser than men
2. The wisdom of this age—vs—the mysterious and timeless wisdom of God—I Cor 2:6ff

- Wisdom of this age—and its rulers—are passing away
- God’s wisdom—a mystery—hidden—before the ages
- God’s wisdom—the rulers of this age have not understood

b. James—worldly wisdom—and wisdom from above—Jas 3:13-17

1. vv14-16—Worldly wisdom

- a. Earthly—natural—and demonic
- b. Bitter jealousy—selfish ambition—arrogant

2. v17—Wisdom from above is these things:

- pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy, good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy

3. Why do James’s recipients—in this context—need wisdom?

- a. To understand better how to persevere—subject of previous verses (2-4) and later verse (12)
- b. To know how to handle wealth and prosperity—verses 9-11
- c. Summary—how to handle two of the main themes of James

Coping with **adversity** and the social implications of Christian **wealth and poverty**

b. **let him ask God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him**

1. ‘ask’—αἰτεῶ

a. Two words most often used in Greek for ‘ask’

- 1. ἐρωτάω—the *other* one—usually means to ask for something **to be done**—to urge some action
- 2. αἰτεῶ—*this* one—usually means **to ask for a thing** from a person

b. Asking God—what else the Bible says about this

1. Sermon on the Mount—Mt 7:7-11

- **Ask** and it will be given to you, seek and you will find . . .
- For everyone who **asks** receives; he who seeks finds . . .
- Which of you if your son **asks** for bread will give him a stone
- Or if he **asks** for a fish will give him a snake
- If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more with your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who **ask** Him!

2. Asking in agreement—Mt 18:19

Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name I am in their midst.

3. Ask—believing—**Mt 21:21-22**

*Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it will happen. And all things you **ask** in prayer, believing, you will receive.*

- This parallels the next verse in James—v 6—you must really believe and not doubt

4. Ask—in Jesus’ name—two passages

a. **Jn 14:13-15**

*Whatever you **ask** in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you **ask** Me anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.*

- This asking must be in line with obedience to Jesus’ commands
- Predicated upon belief in Jesus Himself—see **v 12**
- The promise was—and you will do even greater things than I—**v12**
- So the whole context is—to do those things that Jesus would do if He were here

b. **Jn 15:16**

You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another.

- The object of asking—is to be able to accomplish our purpose: fruit-bearing
- And it must be in the context of Christian love and fellowship
- Another pre-requisite is that we are abiding in Christ—**Jn 15:7**—another ‘asking’ passage:

***Jn 15:7**—If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, **ask** whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

c. Asking in Jesus’ name must be:

- For those things in line with His commandments
- To do the things that Jesus would do if He were here
- Based on firm belief in Jesus and the things that He did
- Based on our abiding in Christ, and His words abiding in us
- To help us to bear fruit—that will endure
- Consistent with Christian love and fellowship

d. All this again is confirmed in **Jn 16:23-24**

*Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; **ask** and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.*

2. ask **God, who gives to all generously, and without reproach**

a. ‘who gives generously’—**απλως**

1. **απλως** means—simply—openly—frankly—sincerely

2. Used only here in the NT

3. Derived from the word **απλους**—which is used only twice in the NT

a. Both places are from the same passage in the Sermon on the Mount—**Mt 6:22** and **Lk 11:34**

b. If your eye is ‘single’—if your eye is ‘good’—your whole body will be full of light

c. To be good and sound—not complicated or confused—focused on one (good) thing

5. Another cognate is **απλοτησ**—usually in the context of giving

a. It can mean liberality or simplicity or singleness of heart (single-mindedness)

b. **Rom 12:8**—he who gives (with the gift of giving) should do so ‘**simply**’

1. Either without mixed motives [i.e. frankly, genuinely, straight-forwardly]

2. Or without hesitation or mental reservation

c. **II Cor 9: 11, 13**—Paul exhorts the Corinthians to give ‘**liberally**’

d. **Eph 6:5** and **Col 3:2**—Paul exhorts slaves to serve masters with **singleness of heart**—or **single-mindedly**

6. So—in James—this could have three meanings

a. God gives **liberally**

b. God gives **simply**—without mixed motives—i.e. without trying to manipulate you—and without hesitation and no reservations—without mental reservation—no holding back

c. God gives **single-mindedly**—intensely focused in devotion to supplying our need

b. ‘and without reproach’

1. **ονειδιζω**—literally—and He does not reproach—he does not revile—he does not upbraid

2. Derived from another word meaning—to ‘shame’

- Which is derived from the word ‘name’
- So—He does not shame you by calling names

3. Another translation—to insult or to throw into the teeth (or face)

a. Example—the thieves at the crucifixion—see **Mt 27:44**:

Mt 27:44—*The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also **insulting** Him with the same words.*(NASB)—making mockery of His title ‘Son of God’

Mt. 27:44—*The thieves also which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.* **KJV**

b. Meaning—to throw something back in someone’s face

4. God deals honestly and graciously with us

a. He gives what we need in a straightforward (and liberal) manner

b. He doesn’t use shame to make us guilty for asking

5. God gives cheerfully—without grumbling and criticizing His children

- God loves a cheerful giver—**II Cor 9:7**
- And God is a cheerful giver—**Jas 1:5**

3. and it will be given him

a. This is the promise—God will certainly do it

b. Evidence of His already giving—freely—without reservation

Mt 6:—[Sermon on the Mount]—If you then though you are evil know how to give good gifts to you children, how much more with your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him?

Mt 10:8—[Sending out the Twelve]—Freely you have received; freely give.

Rom 8:32—[Giving His Son]—He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Rev 22:17—[Of eternal life]]—And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

c. Notice—this is without prejudice

- *Anyone* who asks will receive—He will not withhold from *anyone*
- God is not a respecter of persons—He does not play favorites—**Acts 10:34**

d. When we do not have—it is for one of two reasons

1. First reason implied—because we do not ask: “you do not have because you do not ask”—**Jas 4:2**

2. Second reason—given explicitly in the next verse two verses—you will not have if you doubt

c. [verse 6] **But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering** [KJV]
without doubting [NASB]
and not doubt [NIV]

1. wavering—to waver = **διακρινω**

a. Can be used in a positive way—to **separate** in a way to **judge** or **balance** and be discriminating

- b. Used in a negative way—to **oppose**—to **strive** with—to **hesitate** or **doubt**
- c. Like being at civil war with oneself—two minds at war with each other

2. The object of this doubt—is God

- a. It is not doubt of the *existence* of God
- b. Instead it is lack of confidence in God—i.e. what kind of God is God?
 - Either His *ability* to deliver—i.e. in his power
 - Or His *willingness* to help—i.e. in the nature of His Person—His character
- c. It could also reflect another lack of confidence—in our own identity and relationship with God
 - A lack of belief that God considers us worthy enough to help
 - This challenges the truth that God deems us worthy—because of His Son’s redemption

3. Here James reminds us of what Jesus said about this kind of faith

Mt 21:21—*And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen.*

4. Unwavering example—like Abraham did not waver—when promised a son at age 99

Rom 4:20-21—*yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.*

Here—KJV translates unwavering as ‘did not stagger’

5. Hebrews reiterates—faith must be in God and in His character

Heb 11:6—*And without faith it is impossible to please {Him,} for he who comes to God must believe that He is and {that} He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*

- d. **For he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.** [NIV]
For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed [KJV]
For the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind [NASB]

1. The main picture—the tossing waves—that are unstable

- They are at the mercy of the wind
- They never stay in one place—back and forth—rising and falling

2. A second picture—the swelling and surging waves—they are dangerous

a. They inspire fear in those at their mercy

b. Example: **Mk 4:37-41**—Jesus and the disciples amid the storm on the lake

- The disciples were afraid
- Jesus said this was connected with their lack of faith

3. Biblical examples of wavering faith

- Israel in the wilderness—which repeatedly looked back to Egypt with yearning
- Lot’s wife—who looked back at Sodom and

4. Parallel passage—the Gifts of the Spirit are used to build up the church—to make us mature:

Eph 4:13-15—*until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ.*

5. Results of this wavering

a. Moral problem—we trust other things equally as much as God

b. Jesus gives us a clear choice—either trust God or trust the world

Mt 6:24—you cannot serve two masters!

c. James gives the same advice—**Jas 4:4**

- Friendship with the world is enmity with the world
- Whoever is a friend of the world is an enemy of the world

e. **KJV 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.**

NIV 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

NASB 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

1. “let not that man think” = “that man should not think” = “that man ought not to expect”

a. “think” = suppose—or—think by way of conjecture—imagine

1. Used only 3 times in the NT—here and 2 other places

- (Positive sense) John supposed that all the books in the world could not contain everything Jesus did if they were written down—Jn 21:25
- (Negative sense) Those who preached Christ “out of contention” had supposed to worsen Paul’s afflictions—Ph 1:16

b. This type of expectation or thinking is as tenuous as the doubting itself

- For the one who doubts—he already is uncertain—his expectation cannot be strong

c. Here the level of expectation is linked to the depth of faith: if one has strong faith, the expectation should be strong—if faith is weak, then the expectation is weak

d. But—that is not the only basis for weak expectation. It is also *certain* that one will not receive—because God says so here—that if one doubts—one will not receive!

2. What is it the “anything” the doubter will not receive?
 - a. This does not mean a one-time doubter will not receive “anything” at all forever
 - b. Rather, it is *the* thing one for which the doubter weakly hopes—i.e. “a thing” or “some thing” (τις)
 - c. We all doubt—that does not cut off all promises from God in the future
 - d. This is not about one who doubts occasionally
 1. Instead, it is the one “who is wavering”—present tense—continuous action
 2. This is explained in the next verse—doubting that is an inherent part of one’s nature

3. The inherent nature of the one who is “wavering”
 - a. He is “double-minded”—διψυχος
 1. This means—“two” + “souls”—2-minds—2-hearts = 2 beings
 - a. Being divided in interest focus—eyes set on other things
 - b. Like the seed sown among thorns—distracted by desires for other things
 2. Opposite = being single-minded—focused—unified
 - a. In the Old Testament—those who are true and single-hearted
 - o **Dt 6:5**—Love the Lord your God with *all* your heart and with *all* your soul and with *all* your strength.
 - o **Dt 10:12**—similar passage—also **Dt 11:13**—also **Dt 13:3**
 - b. In the New Testament—single-minded—unified in mind
 - o **Ph 1:27**—be of one spirit—striving together for the faith of the gospel
 - o **Ph 2:2**—be of one accord—one mind--
 3. This is spiritual schizophrenia
 - a. Not just a state of the mind—but of the depth of the soul
 - b. There is a **moral problem** at its core
 1. Either deep-seated doubt about the person and ability of God
 2. Or a lifestyle of sin that is not willing to relinquish and submit to God
 - c. Paul uses the noun form to describe “confusion” and “disorder”—resulting from immorality
 - o God is not the God of confusion, but of peace—**I Cor 14:33**
 - o Moral problems associated with evil activity—disorder—**II Cor 12:20**
 - d. So the person who does not receive from God—is the one who

- o Has a lifestyle of doubting—whose belief is superficial and ephemeral
- o Who is not really devoted to God—either out of doubt or immorality

b. He is “unstable in all his ways”—“unstable in all he does”

1. ‘Unstable’—is used only here in the NT

2. ‘Unstable’ means: not firmly set or established

a. Literally—one without firm or solid footing

b. Inconstant—restless

3. ‘ways’—**οδοσ**—all of one’s pathways

a. Uncertain in the direction one is going

o Like a SCUD missile—with a poor guidance system—unlike Patriot Missiles

b. Uncertain footing on the pathway

o Like one staggering and stumbling—unlike a sure-footed mountain goat

4. This instability is a result of doubting

a. Not trusting God for direction

b. Not following the true Way—Jesus Christ—who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life

c. So—it is this type of person—one who is not focused on serving and pleasing God—one who is constantly off the path with God and does not discern His will—who should not expect God to respond to frivolous and empty requests

II. The Testing of Faith (1:2-18)

A. Trials Produce Perfection (1:2-11)

3. Through a right perspective on wealth (1:9-11)

KJV— **9** Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: **10** But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. **11** For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

NIV— **9** The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. **10** But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. **11** For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

NASB— **9** But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; **10** and the rich man {is to glory} in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. **11** For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

a. The context—brothers

1. This addresses two types of ‘brothers’

a. The brother in low circumstances—‘brother’ is mentioned explicitly

b. The rich brother

1. ‘brother’ is not stated explicitly

2. An adjective by itself could mean ‘rich one’ or ‘rich man’—any rich person

3. Or the adjective can apply to the previous noun—brother

2. Here—in this context—it is understood: the previous noun completes the adjective—‘rich brother’

b. The brother in low circumstances

1. in ‘humble circumstances’

a. Literally—‘not rising from the ground’

b. One in a lowly position—implying two things

1. One with little—if any—power

2. One with little money

2. take pride—rejoice—glory

a. The word is **καυχασθαι**—**not** the literal word for glory or rejoice

b. Literally—it means “**boast**” or “**brag**”

3. in his ‘exalted’ position—**υψος**—noun meaning ‘**height**’

4. How is the lowly brother in an exalted position

a. Biblical principle—the last shall be first—**Mt 19:30** and **20:16**

b. Because of three possible reasons

1. Positional—one in a lowly position is more apt to depend on God and recognize his need for God

2. Spiritual—this could mean one in a spiritually humble state

3. Eschatological

a. Though now in a low position, he will be exalted in the kingdom

b. This is not a uniquely high position because of his lowliness now—all followers will be exalted

c. But it is a much higher position than he holds here and now

- d. Do not be intimidated by a lowly position now—live with confidence of a realized eschatology
- c. The rich person—or rich brother
 - 1. Rich—**πλουσιος**—worldly wealth
 - a. Abundant material resources
 - b. taken from verb meaning—‘to be filled (full)’
 - c. Always applies to worldly wealth—see examples ↓
 - 1. The ‘rich’ young ruler—showed it is hard for a ‘rich’ man to enter heaven—**Lk 18:23-25**
 - 2. The ‘rich’ man (Dives) and the beggar (Lazarus)--
 - 3. But some ‘rich’ men did follow Jesus
 - a. Joseph of Arimathea—**Mt 27:57**
 - b. Zacchaeus the tax collector—**Lk 19:2, 8-9**
 - 2. Implied phrase—not explicitly stated here
 - a. ‘should take pride’—is implied from the previous verse
 - b. This gives further evidence that ‘brother’ should also be implied here
 - c. Literally—this reads: “the rich in his lowness”
 - 3. There is one clear reason for this
 - a. The text looks to the **future**—eschatological focus—the ending
 - b. This suggests that the main reason for the humble brother’s pride is also eschatological
 - c. Both the poor and the wealthy person will eventually lose everything—even this life
 - d. So—why the joy—glory—or boasting in this humility?
 - 1. In the kingdom, he will be brought to the same position as the poor brother
 - 2. Neither one will have earthly wealth—but eternal treasures beyond measure
 - 3. One *must* lose everything—life and eventually wealth—in order to inherit the kingdom of God

Mk 8:35-7—For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?
- d. What happens to the wealthy eventually—vv 10b-11
 - 1. The same thing happens to both rich and humble eventually—we all die and our worldly wealth withers
 - 2. But the contrast is more dramatic for the wealthy and powerful—the fall is farther and more dramatic

3. The context of this parable

- a. A phenomenon in Palestine: when the sun rises, the buttercups and cyclamen droop and wither, becoming fit only for fuel.
- b. This could also be the searing hot wind from the south during certain seasons.

4. The suddenness of the loss of wealth

- a. Picture: the suddenness of the hot desert wind—scirocco desert wind—that withers plants

- 1. Scirocco—out of North Africa—March or November—very hot—50-60 mph
- 2. In Palestine-Syria-Libya—known as ‘shaluq’

Ps 103:15-17—*As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer. But the loving kindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him.*

- b. Picture: the withering desert flower

Is 40:6-8—*All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.*

Note: **I Pe 1:24-5** quotes this to make the point: “you have been born not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and enduring word of God.”

- c. Picture: the temporariness of wealth—and prospect of sudden loss

Lk 12:16-21—parable about the rich man who wanted to raise new barns for more grain—and to eat, drink, and be merry.

vv20-21—*But God said to him, “You fool” This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?” So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

- d. Remember—one’s lot in life is at the mercy of God

I Sam 2:7—*The Lord makes poor and rich, He brings low; He also exalts.*

5. Principle—do not rely on wealth

Mt 6:19-21—*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

- d. Why is it so difficult for rich persons?

- 1. They come to depend on themselves and not God
- 2. They develop a taste for wealth and power—it becomes addictive—the need for more

3. They struggle two to three times as much as poorer persons

a. Jesus warned about three things that will choke the word—Parable of Sower

1. The worries of this life
2. The deceitfulness of wealth
3. The desires for other things

b. Both the rich and poor struggle with the first one—the worries of this life—but the poor more so

c. But the rich have a really hard time with the other two—more so than the poor

e. Yet—it is not impossible for the rich to follow God—but they must keep things in proper perspective

I Tim 6:17-18—*Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.*

II. The Testing of Faith (1:2-18)

A. Trials Produce Perfection (1:2-11)

1. Through the development of perseverance (1:2-4)
2. Through growth in wisdom (1:5-8)
3. Through a right perspective on wealth (1:9-11)

B. Perseverance Produces the Reward (1:12-18)

1. The ultimate reward—the crown of life (1:12)
2. The chief impediment: sin—its cause and result (1:13-16)
3. The source of all good—and His gift to us (1:17-18)

II. The Testing of Faith

B. Perseverance Produces the Reward (1:12-18)

1. The ultimate reward—the crown of life (1:12)

KJV—Blessed [is] the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

NASB—Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which {the Lord} has promised to those who love Him.

NIV—Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

a. “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial”

1. Blessed = makarios = ‘happy’

a. Same word used in the beatitudes

b. Similar context—blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness—**Mt 5:10**

2. the man who perseveres in trial

a. This is a restatement of verses 2 and 3 in a different way

b. See the use of words

verse 2—encounter ‘**temptations/trials**’ = peirasmos (noun)

verse 12—endure ‘**temptation/trial**’ = peirasmos (noun)

verse 3—trying of your faith works ‘**patience**’ = upomene (noun)

verse 12—‘**endures**’ (**shows patience in face of**) temptation = upomeno (verb)

c. Temptation/trial

Verse 2 shows the beginning—one encounters trials

Verse 12 shows the end—one endures trials

d. Patience

Verse 3 shows what should happen—patience/perseverance (results from trying of faith)

Verse 12 shows the final result—one who has persevered, has shown patience—is happy

e. Verses 2-3 show what should happen and interim result—verse 12 shows the final result

1. Verses 2-3 show the interim result: testing of faith → perseverance → maturity

2. Verse 12—but the final result goes beyond maturity—it results in divine happiness

f. This ‘blessing’ applies to those who persevere in the three contexts already addressed

1. Those who withstood the trials of persecution and opposition—that was clearly on the horizon

2. Those who overcame their spiritual immaturity—grew in wisdom—by asking God in faith

3. Those who were rightly related to material possessions—things of the world—whether rich or poor

b. “for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life”

1. This explains why a person is ‘blessed’—divinely happy

2. The key point is seen in the ‘testing’

a. The same root word is used in both verses 3 and 12

- verse 3—dokimion—is the noun: the ‘testing’—which is the *process* of proving the metal

- verse 12—dokimos—is the adjective: the ‘proven/approved’ quality that has resulted

b. Verses 2-4 tell it like it should be—verse 12 tells the final result of going through that process

3. Our divine ‘happiness’ (blessed)—derives from the ultimate result

a. Is not just happiness at having gone through the *process* of trial and overcoming it

b. Is not just happiness at becoming more mature—becoming what God wants us to be

c. It is both of those things—but they are interim goals

d. Ultimate blessedness is obtaining the final goal at the end—the crown of life

4. Crown of life

a. Metaphor for—eternal happiness for God’s servants—the final reward given to the righteous

II Tim 3:8—*In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

b. But this crown was obtained by Jesus, not by us

1. The only place ‘crown’ is mention in the Gospels—is the Jesus’ crown of **thorns**

2. He purchased our righteousness with His sacrifice—laying down His crown temporarily to buy ours

3. Crown ‘of life’—can have several meaning

- The obvious meaning = **salvation = eternal life**
- **Crown** produced by [the] life[-giver]—in Him was life and that life is the light of men
- Crown that **symbolizes** life—Jesus’ gives this crown to symbolize and give us life
- The **apex** [crown] of life—the ultimate goal/crown of living this life—eternal life

c. Crowns symbolize

1. Victory—wreath/crown given to victor in games

I Cor 9:25—*Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.*

- Obvious meaning—we will have victory over sin and death—the victory of life eternal

2. Exalted position—royalty

- Obvious meaning—we will reign with Him eternally

5. “that God/the Lord has promised to those who love Him”

a. We are to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and strength—Shema—**Dt 6:4-5**

b. Scriptural basis for this promise—to those who love Him

Dt 7:9—*Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments*

Is 64:4—quoted in **I Cor 2:9**—*Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.*

Eph 6:24—*Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.*

II. The Testing of Faith (1:2-18)

B. Perseverance Produces the Reward (1:12-18)

1. The ultimate reward—the crown of life (1:12)
2. The chief impediment: sin—its cause and result (1:13-16)

KJV— Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren.

NIV— When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers.

NASB— Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

13 μηδείς πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι Ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πειράζομαι ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπείραστός ἐστιν κακῶν πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδένα

14 ἕκαστος δὲ πειράζεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος

15 εἴτα ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον

16 Μὴ πλανᾶσθε ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί

a. Prefatory note—about sin

- o Most people do not sin just because they want to ‘sin’—just to be bad for the sake of badness
- o Some people do wrong just for the sake of being ‘evil’—they enjoy it—but this is rare
- o Most people sin because of some benefit or pleasure they think they gain
- o Even most people who like being ‘bad’ do it for benefit—e.g. unique anti-social reputation
- o So—what is it that attracts a person to sin?
- o We call this temptation

b. What is ‘temptation’?

1. The verb is **πειραζω**

- a. What Satan did to Jesus in the wilderness—same verb in Mt 4:1

- b. Can be used two ways
 - 1. Positive sense—to test the mettle or quality of something
 - 2. Negative sense—malicious tempting—with evil intention
- 2. It parallels the noun—**πειρασμος**—in **v 2** and **v 12**
- c. Temptation does not come from God
 - 1. God cannot be tempted with evil
 - a. This is the evil type of temptation
 - We are not to tempt God—Jesus told Satan during temptations—Mt 4:7
 - Not to test him with doubt and disobedience—like Israel in desert—Dt 6:16
 - b. But there is a good type of testing—that God invites
 - To meet His challenge to test His promise—Mal 4:10
 - 2. God does not tempt anyone
 - a. Implied—that God does not tempt us in this same way—not malicious or evil type of temptation
 - b. But this does not mean God does not test us in the positive way
 - c. God does ‘tempt’ us—with trials that strengthen us and make us better
 - 4. Either way—God can use temptation for good
 - a. Making us grow stronger through trials—vv 2 and 12
 - b. But He can even bring good results from evil temptation—victory over the results of sin
 - c. This relates to **v 17**—all good things come from God
- d. How does temptation begin?
 - 1. Things exist that have the *potential* to tempt us
 - a. Some of these things are inherently bad—unhealthy—evil
 - b. But some things that are ‘tempting’ are not inherently bad—just that we use them in bad ways
 - 2. But nothing is a ‘temptation’ by itself—not until we *want* them—with ‘evil desire’—or ‘lust’
 - a. ‘lust’—**επιθυμια**
 - b. this means—craving—longing—desire for what is forbidden
 - o Uncontrollable appetite—like a magnet—that takes over our mental power and spiritual will
 - o Sometime—just the fact that it is forbidden makes it attractive

- c. Same word used in **Mk 4:19**—**desires**—the seed among thorns is choke by three things
 - o Worries of this life
 - o Deceitfulness of wealth
 - o **Desires** for other things [apart from the word]
- d. ‘desire’—by itself—is not bad
 - 1. Desires can be good—desire to eat—to breathe—to procreate
 - 2. Only when abused for wrong purposes—are desires ‘evil’
 - o When fulfilling them violates natural and divine law
 - o When fulfilling them brings harm to others or self
- 3. The ‘temptation’ is not the magnet—instead it is our own lust
 - a. Temptations are alluring but they have no power to pull us away
 - b. It is the power of our lust that pulls us toward ‘tempting’ things
 - c. This lustful desire is ‘our own’
 - o It has not external origin
 - o Not only does it not come from God
 - o Not only does it not come from external ‘temptations’
 - o It also does not come from other people—we cannot blame anyone else
 - o It comes strictly from within—we must take ownership of our own sinful nature
- 4. The ‘evil desire’ does two things
 - a. ‘drawn away’—**εξελκω**
 - o Word picture = to lure—luring an animal out of hiding—a hunting metaphor
 - o To draw out—lure—as with a seductive woman
 - b. ‘enticed’—**δελεαζω**
 - o Word picture = bait—to catch with bait—a fishing metaphor
 - o To deceive—beguile—bait
- e. Evil desire is the beginning of a chain—leading to worse things
 - 1. All ‘desire’ is not bad—only when it takes over and controls us
 - 2. Only ‘evil desire’ can do this and lead to worse things
- f. The chain of death—a growing—nurturing process
 - 1. Other biblical word pictures of nurturing process
 - a. The kingdom of God is like a growing seed

Mark 4:26-29—*The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to*

bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.

b. The kingdom of heaven includes two types of growing seeds

Mt 13:24-30—*The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?” And he said to them, “An enemy has done this!” The slaves said to him, “Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?” But he said, “No, for while you are gathering up the tares you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up, but gather the wheat unto my barn.’”*

2. The nurturing process of sin

a. Lust conceives—it ‘mates’ with temptation to produce the seed of sin

b. Sin is the child of our desire

- o Sin does not exist on its own—it has no objective reality by itself
- o Sin—like a child—must be produced—born from *parents* who already exist
- o Sin is the product of two parents—evil desire and temptation

c. The growth of sin and its fruit

- o Once conceived—sin *will* grow
- o And it will bear fruit—death
- o There is no such thing as sin without consequence—it *always* produces death

d. The ironic language—sin gives *birth* to *death*—an oxymoron

g. Do not be deceived

1. Warning against being deceived by sinful desire

2. A word of closure and transition

a. It completes the first idea

- o Do not be deceived about God
- o He does not tempt anyone

b. And it introduces the next idea

- o Instead of God tempting us—deceiving us
- o God is the author of all good things—in the next verse

3. Same formula used by Paul as introductory phrase of transition

I Cor 15:33—*Do not be deceived; bad company corrupts good morals.*

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3. The source of all good—and His gift to us (1:17-18)

KJV—17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. **18** Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

NIV—17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. **18** He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

NASB—17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights,
with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. **18** In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

a. Context—previous verses have mentioned three things addressed in these two verses

1. Giving of a gift—God will give wisdom if we ask Him
2. Doubting of men—unstable in all their ways
3. Four things associated with sin and deception
 - a. Temptation—of the evil type
 - b. Being lured away (drawn out of hiding)—to be trapped
 - c. Being enticed (baited)
 - d. Death—the result of sin

b. James closes the loop with verse 5—good and perfect gifts

1. **Wisdom** is one of the good gifts
2. Here James reminds us of the **source**—of wisdom and *all* good gifts

3. Implied—whatever other good gifts we want/need—we can get—from God
4. **Eternal** nature of this promise—from the beginning of creation (His making of the lights)—every good gift has come from Him
5. Reminder: bad gifts do *not* come from God—**v 13**—He does not tempt anyone

c. The word picture—God as creator—the Father of Lights

1. He put the ‘lights’ in place
 - a. Original creation account—Gen 1:14-18
 - b. Affirmed by Psalmist

Ps 136:7-9—*To Him who made the great lights, for His loving kindness is everlasting; the sun to rule by day, for His loving kindness is everlasting. The moon and stars to rule by night for His loving kindness is everlasting.*

2. The nature of the Logos reflects this idea

Jn 1:4-5—*In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

d. In whom there is not shadow of turning

1. All the other heavenly bodies change
 - a. The moon has phases and is affected by the gravity of earth
 - b. Slight variation in the orbits
 - c. Eventually every star runs out of fuel and burns out

2. But God the Father of lights is eternally constant

1. He **guides** all the courses of the heavens
2. He never varies in his nature, character, will, or purpose
3. He *never* tempts anyone
4. He is *always* reliable—and will always give good gifts—never bad ones
5. He is not like unstable men—who doubt—and are like waves tossed by the wind

e. He brings us forth by the word of truth

1. ‘Brings us forth’—God the Father gives His children birth/life
 - a. This is in contrast with the death that comes from sin—v 15
 - b. Biblical evidence—the ‘new birth’

I Pe 1:3—*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy*

has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

2. By the word of truth

a. The new birth that comes through the living Word

I Pe 1:23—*for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and enduring word of God.*

b. This is in contrast to all the deception in verse 14—tempted—lured away—and enticed

c. Generally—the word of truth is the Bible

II Tim 2:15—*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the **word of truth**.*

d. Specifically—this truth is the Gospel—the good news

Eph 1:13—*In whom [Christ] ye also trusted, after that ye heard the **word of truth**, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*

Col 1:5—*For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the **word of the truth of the gospel***

f. We are His first fruits

1. In the Old Testament—first-fruits were totally dedicated to God

a. Included humans

b. Given in thanksgiving to God

c. They were considered God's special possession

2. In the New Testament—the redeemed of the Lord

a. Here and now

Rom 16:5

I Cor 15:20

I Cor 16:15

b. At the end times

II Th 2:13

Rev 14:4

OUTLINE OF CHAPTER ONE

I. Greeting (1:1)

II. The Testing of Faith (1:2-18)

A. Trials Produce Perfection (1:2-11)

1. Through the development of perseverance (1:2-4)
2. Through growth in wisdom (1:5-8)
3. Through a right perspective on wealth (1:9-11)

B. Perseverance Produces the Reward (1:12-18)

1. The ultimate reward—the crown of life (1:12)
2. The chief impediment: sin—its cause and result (1:13-16)
3. The source of all good—and His gift to us (1:17-18)

III. Obeying God's Word (1:19-27)

A. The right conditions (1:19-21)

1. The right attitude (1:19-20)

2. The right reception (1:21)

B. The right behavior: doing and not just hearing (1:22-25)

C. The right standards (1:26-27)

1. Empty religion (1:26)

2. True religion (1:27)

III. Obeying God's Word (1:19-27)

A. The Right Conditions (1:19-21)

1. The right attitude (1:19-20)

KJV—19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: **20** For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

NASB—19 {This} you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak {and} slow to anger; **20** for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

NIV—19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, **20** for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

a. Introduces a major concept in the rest of James—self-control

1. Here—this involves controlling two things

- Our speech
- Our emotions—anger

2. Controlling our speech—elsewhere in James

a. Other passages

- o The power and danger of the tongue—and the need to bridle it—**3:1-12**

- o Do not speak against each other—passing judgment (implied also—slander)—**4:11**
- o Do not swear—make an oath—be straightforward in your speech—yes/yes and no/no—**5:12**

b. Importance of those passages—in context of church

1. **Jas 3:1-12**

- We set an example—especially as teachers—**3:1**
- Our witness must be consistent with God’s character—**3:9**
- The fruit of our mouth gives evidence whether we are true or false followers—**3:10-12**

2. **Jas 4:11**

- Countering evil behavior in the body
- Maintaining unity in the body

3. **Jas 5:12**

- Straightforwardness and transparency needed in the coming days
- As you persevere and give testimony in the last days

3. Controlling our emotions—elsewhere in James

a. Other passages

- o The sources of strife in the church—generated from internal emotions and desires—**Jas 4:1-10**
- o The need to exercise patience—**Jas 5:7-11**

b. Importance of those passages—in context of church

1. **Jas 4:1-10**—controlling our emotions and desires—for the sake of others and unity of the body
2. **Jas 5:7-11**—the Lord is near—the end is coming—persevere [as in **1:2-4,12**]until He returns

b. Controlling ourselves—in the context of these verses—in chapter 1

1. Our **goal** is to **obey** the word of God

2. But in order to obey God’s word we must make the conditions right for obedience

a. Later—**second**—in verse 21—we must receive the word

b. But **first**—in verse 19-20—we must **prepare** our attitudes for its right reception

- o Like preparing the soil for the growing of the seed
- o Like the four types of soil in the Parable of the Sower

c. The **problem** with preparing our attitudes—[shut up—listen—and calm down!!!]

1. These things are not ‘natural’—‘natural’ man wants to do the opposite

2. They can be done only by a Spirit-controlled temperament!

d. Explanation—*how* to prepare our attitudes for receiving God’s word

1. Be quick to listen

a. Root words: ‘swift’ = **ταχυς** and ‘hear’ = **ακουω**
1. ‘tach’—root word for ‘tachometer’—used only here in the NT

2. ‘akouo’—root word for ‘acoustic’

b. This is not just about our ears or hearing

1. It is about *listening*—not just hearing

2. It begins with our attitude—wanting to know and understand what is being said

Ex: when husbands look like we are listening—but our minds are on the ballgame when the light is on—but nobody is at home

3. It really means to “switch ourselves on”—“turn our radio on”—“revved up” like a tachometer

4. We must really have an eager desire—even a passion—to know God’s word

2. Be slow to speak

a. Root word: **βραδυσ**—meaning slow—also dull or stupid

b. Obvious meaning

- o Don’t be *quick* to speak—pause before we speak
- o It is almost impossible to listen while we are talking
- o Listen first—get the facts—before we talk about what we do not know

c. Possible secondary meaning

- o Compared to God’s word—our speech is dull, slow and stupid
- o Don’t think that our words are smarter or more incisive than God’s word

d. Alternative—being fast to speak and slow to listen

1. This leads to self-reliance and spiritual dullness

2. Example—two disciples on Road to Emmaus [only other place **βραδυσ** is used in NT]

a. **Read Lk 24:13-16**—the disciples ‘were prevented’ from recognizing Jesus—but by what?

b. They were so busy telling Jesus all they knew—**read Lk 24:13-24**—they did not understand

c. Jesus pointed out their real problem—why they did not recognize and understand

Lk 24:25-26—*Of foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?*

3. Be slow to wrath

a. Root word: **οργη**—means anger—but also being agitated—impulsive—violently emotional

b. Main meaning may be ‘anger’

1. In most places in NT when applied to **humans**—it means ‘anger’
2. Here are some examples—of human **anger**—like ‘wrath’—**θυμῶσ** (passion, heat, anger, inflamed)
 - o Associated with bitterness, wrath, clamor, and evil speaking—**Eph 4:31**
 - o Associated with rage, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication—**Col 3:8**
3. This is inconsistent with God’s character
 1. God is love—we are to love Him and our neighbors
 2. His Word is stunted in us if we are always angry—with Him
 3. If we are always angry with other people
 - o We are not consistent with His character and word
 - o Anger will choke the work
 - o Do not let spring up—it will defile many—**Heb 12:15**

c. But it can also mean—an unsettled state of being—volatile—agitated

1. Implication—God’s word must be planted in stable soil
2. The seed of God’s word cannot grow if it is constantly being tilled up
3. So—we must calm down
 - a. Nurture the seed of God’s word in a consistent, faithful and patient way
 - b. Not being distracted by problems that cause inner turmoil—and lack of inner reflection

d. **Slow** to anger—does not preclude all angry action

1. God used the prophets and even Jesus to express anger
2. This anger did not originate in human selfish desire—but with God’s call to oppose wrong-doing
3. God might call upon us to express righteous indignation
4. But we must be **slow** to do this for two reasons—see we have time to pray
 - a. To make sure it originates with God—not human just human passion
 - b. To discern God’s will—to know the godly course of action to take

e. Special Warning about Anger—v 20

1. This elaborates on human anger being inconsistent with God’s character
2. God does get angry—but His anger is different than human anger
 - a. Most of the NT references to ‘wrath’ apply to God—and *all* 5 of them in the Gospels

b. For example:

1. Jesus got ‘angry’ at the Pharisees for their stubbornness and lack of mercy—**Mk 3:5**
2. He also became ‘indignant’ when disciples turned away children—**Mk 10:14**
3. Against arrogant/unethical scribes—“such men will be punished most severely”—**Mk 12:40**

c. Definition of ‘godly anger’ = righteous indignation at evil, wrong-doing and indifference

Opposes **opposite** behavior in Micah 6:8—anything opposing mercy, justice, humility

d. God’s wrath always has a redemptive purpose—seeking our repentance and reconciliation

3. Human anger is ungodly

a. It is self motivated—selfish—seeks its own will first—not God’s will

It does **not** seek first the Father’s Kingdom and His righteousness

b. If often focuses on, or results in, vengeance—which belongs only to God

Rom 12:19—*Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay* [see **Dt 32:35**]

c. Human anger can cause sinful action—and Paul exhorts us not to remain angry

In your anger do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger; do not give the devil a foothold—**Eph 4:26**

d. We are commanded to purge ourselves of anger—notice it is at the top of the list!

But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips—**Col 3:8**

e. This passage **defines** human anger as ‘ungodly’—being totally out of synch with God

- Human anger does not achieve God’s righteousness
- So, human anger actually works against God’s righteousness—no neutrality here
- Then, human anger is **unrighteous**
- And unrighteousness—is being out of proper relationship with God
- Therefore—human anger is **ungodly**

4. Biblical examples of human anger not accomplishing God’s righteousness—**not** setting things right

a. James and John wanting to call down heavenly fire upon the Samaritans

Jesus rebuked them—**Lk 9:55**—*You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.*

b. Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, servant of the high priest—**Jn 18:11**—*So Jesus said to Peter, Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?*

III. Obeying God's Word (1:19-27)

A. The right conditions (1:19-21)

1. The right attitude (1:19-20)

2. The right reception (1:21)

B. The right behavior: doing and not just hearing (1:22-25)

C. The right standards (1:26-27)

1. Empty religion (1:26)

2. True religion (1:27)

A. The right conditions

1. **The right attitude** = quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger

2. The right reception—1:21

KJV—Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

NIV—Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

NASB—Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

a. The first condition—1:20—deals with inherent attitudes and emotions that might block reception of word

- Open our ears—and minds and hearts
- Shut our mouths—so we can really listen
- Slow our anger—don't be agitated—or we cannot focus and comprehend

b. The second condition—1:21—deals with behaviors and habits that actively oppose the word

- Moral filth
- Evil/wickedness

c. Action to be taken

1. Lay apart (KJV)—get rid of (NIV)—put aside (NASB)

2. **αποτιθημι** = cast aside—throw away—get rid of

- o **Rom 13:12**—The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us **lay aside** the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

- o **Eph 4:22-4**—in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside** the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in the righteousness and holiness of the truth.
 - o **Col 3:8**—But now you also **put them all aside**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.
 - o **Heb 12:1**—let us also **lay aside** every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.
- Examples:** Housecleaning—getting rid of the clutter and garbage—not just re-arranging piles
 Cleaning out the closet—old clothes (don't fit or out of date)—to make room for new
 Cleaning out the old files—so there will be no confusion between different versions
 Getting rid of things that remind us of bad times—old days we want to forget

d. Two things to get rid of

1. Filthiness—moral filth

a. **ρυπαρια** = morally defiled—dirty in a wicked sense

1. Used only here in the NT

2. Cognate—**ρυπαρος**—is used in James 2:2—also unique in NT

b. Here **ρυπαρια** is obviously used in an *inner* moral way

- o Filthy to the core—something that defiles the very being
- o It is to be eradicated with great prejudice—hate and purge this filth!

c. But—**ρυπαρος**—in 2:2—is just an *external* condition

- o It is just superficial and temporary—does not affect the character within
- o Can be remedied with a little soap and water—not a real problem
- o Should not be used as a basis to judge the inner person

d. Reminder of what Jesus said

1. Contrasting *internal* and *external* conditions—*clean* and *unclean*

2. In this passage, He gives a good list of those things that are ‘filthy’

Mk 7:14-23—*Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, Listen to me, everyone, and understand this, Nothing outside a man can make him unclean by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that make him unclean . . . He went on: What comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean.*

2. Naughtiness (KJV)—evil (NIV)—wickedness (NASB)

a. **κακια**—wicked, depraved, malignant, evil—from **κακος** (meaning ‘bad’)

1. In the KJV elsewhere—usually translated ‘malicious’ or ‘maliciousness’—or evil

2. A good example of its meaning (rare ‘wickedness’ in KJV) is **Acts 8:22**

- o When Peter and John chastised Simon Magus for wanting to ‘buy’ the Holy Spirit
- o *But Peter said to him, May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.*

3. Such profound wickedness—so **depraved**—that a person cannot distinguish right from wrong

b. Wickedness that is ‘superfluity of’ (KJV)—‘prevalent’ (NIV)—‘that remains’ (NASB)

1. **περισσεια**—super-abundance—or—residue

2. Usually translated ‘abundance’ in KJV

- o **Rom 5:17**—abundance of God’s grace coming through Christ’s righteousness
- o **II Cor 8:2**—abundance of joy the Macdonians experienced as they gave sacrificially
- o **II Cor 10:15**—Paul was enlarged abundantly when Corinthians’ faith increased
- o **Here**—this would mean abounding everywhere—prevalent in the world around us

3. But it *could* mean—that which is left over—what remains

- o **Here**—this would mean—the residue of sinful inclination that remains after conversion
- o So—we still must struggle with the inner man—**Rom 7**—that fights to re-emerge

e. Receiving the word

1. Basic concepts

- How to receive it—with humility
- How it comes to us—it is implanted/engrafted
- What the word can do—the word can save us

2. How it is received—with humility—**πραυτος** = gentle spirit [like **πραυς**—‘meek’ in Sermon on Mt]

a. Not with arrogance

- o Not thinking we already know it all
- o Not proud of ourselves, our status, and our accomplishments
- o Not thinking we don’t need to be reformed—that we are already good

b. Instead

- o With a teachable spirit
- o Being willing to be broken by the word—going from high and mighty, to becoming a servant
- o With a willingness to be humbled—recognizing our sin revealed by the word—and be reformed

c. A gentle spirit—*after* receiving the word—in sharing it with others

- o Does not treat others arrogantly or judgmentally with the word
- o But is gentle in using the word to instruct and correct—without browbeating

See **II Tim 2:24-25**—*The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness, correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth . . .*

3. How the word comes

a. It is implanted—**εμουτοσ**—in + spring up = inborn

1. Not just grafted onto—so that it must ‘take’ in order to live

2. Not just planted in the soil—so that it dies and grows

3. But put *into* us with a life of its own—already alive!

b.. We don’t put it there—we cannot do implants on ourselves—but put there by another—Holy Spirit

4. What the word can do—what it has the power (**δυναμαι**) to do

a. Using the analogy in this verse—the implant

- o The word has life in itself
- o But continued life is not automatic—not unconditionally guaranteed
- o That life must be sustained—it must have the right conditions and receive
- o It will not thrive in a morally defiled and wickedly depraved environment—see this verse

b. Using the analogies in the Parable of the Sower—the seed

- o Will not grow along the path/road
- o Will not grow on rocky places and shallow soil
- o Will not grow among the thorns
- o Will grow only on good soil—i.e. gentle heart—and undefiled

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2. The right reception (1:21)

B. The right behavior: doing and not just hearing (1:22-25)

C. The right standards (1:26-27)

1. Empty religion (1:26)

2. True religion (1:27)

B. The Right Behavior—doing and not just hearing (1:22-25)

KJV—22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. **23** For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: **24** For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. **25** But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth [therein], he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

NASB—22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. **23** For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; **24** for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. **25** But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

NIV—22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. **23** Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror **24** and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. **25** But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

1. Main ideas

- This is the heart of verses 19-27—the section dealing with obedience to God’s word
- It is not enough for conditions to be right—vv 19-20—prepared by right attitude and right reception
- It is not enough for us to have the right values—following—vv 26-7
- This is to no avail if we do not act—to do what God directs and commands
- To prepare and believe right values alone is to delude—to deceive—ourselves [not just others and God]
- It is to forget the ultimate purpose of these attitudes, preparations, and values—lose sight of what is real
- It is ephemeral—of not lasting value or benefit—like looking in a mirror and walking away
- It is also like looking at our own imperfect selves as a gauge for what is pure, perfect and permanent
- But those who use and obey God’s perfect law as a gauge become effective instruments of God
- They also experience the purpose of God’s perfect law—liberty
- This law frees us from sin/death—and gives us genuinely free choice to serve God and to have eternal life
- Contrasting analogies—looking at earthly glass mirror (clouded)—vs—looking at the Law of liberty (clear)

2. Background—of freedom and slavery

- a. The purpose of the OT law—God gave it for the benefit of the people—their health, safety, and salvation
- b. The purpose of the NT fulfillment of that law—through Jesus Christ

1. Jesus fulfilled the word—brought the real truth—**Jn 8**—to free people from sin

a. Freedom in Christ

Jn 8:31-32—*If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*

b. Freedom from sin—and empty traditions of men—spoken to Pharisees who claimed Abraham as father

Jn 8:34-36—*Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So, if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.*

2. The new law of the Spirit of life in Christ—did what the old Law could not do

Rom 8:2-3—*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did; sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin. He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. . . For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out ‘Abba, Father!’*

3. This new law—is not empty legalism—which brings bondage [Paul tells the Galatian legalists]

Gal 2:4—*But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.*

3. The call to a lifestyle: be doers of the word—not just hearers—**v 22**

- a. Literally—‘become’—**γίνομαι**—doers of the word
 1. This is not—as we might expect—the verb ‘to do’ in the imperative
 2. So—it is not a command just to singular or even multiple actions
 3. It is a call to process of changing our nature—becoming—a finished product → i.e. a doer [noun]
 4. So this suggests a whole metamorphosis—change in lifestyle—regularly obeying God’s word
- b. This does not ignore the importance of hearing the word
 1. It *assumes* we are already hearers—and this is very important
 2. Doing without hearing is dangerous—we then do just what we *think* is right
 3. But we must go beyond our knowledge of the truth—and put it into practice
- c. Delusion—deception—what happens when we hear but do not act—**v 22**
 1. **παραλογίζομαι** = to reason around—circumvent—cheat—miscount—[to outwit or outfox ourselves]
 2. How do we do this?
 - Make ourselves feel safe and comfortable because we know what is right
 - Think we are okay because nobody is perfect—and we will not be held accountable anyway
 - Or we rely on legalism—keeping all the traditions of men—which are easier—than God’s way
 3. This is exactly what Jesus opposed with the scribes and Pharisees—who deluded themselves
 - They thought they were safe as ‘insiders’ but they were really ‘outsiders’
 - They relied on Jewish lineage and rabbinic traditions to make them feel safe
4. Two analogies—the mirror and the perfect law
 - a. Mirror watchers—**vv 23-4**
 1. The temporary nature of looking at mirrors—we *still* do this—forget quickly what we look like
 2. Mirrors in those days were not as clear as today—polished bronze—did not give a crystal clear reflection
 3. Mirrors also do not accurately show reality—they reverse the image!
 4. To look at a mirror for values—is defective
 - a. It is an earthly—human—and defective standard
 - b. It is to look at one’s self as the standard—humanistic—subjective—and relativistic
 - c. To stare at a mirror—the height of vanity—all the world and reality revolve around me!
 5. Mirrors show only the surface—the superficial image—not the inner character
 6. Mirrors bring a type of bondage

- a. To rely on a mirror means to come back time and time again—because we forget what we look like
 - b. Also because—our own image always changes—we must always come back to the mirror for updates
- b. The perfect law—v 25
- 1. Is the only clear—objective—and true standard
 - 2. It is permanent—unchanging and invariable—like God Himself
 - 3. We can put it in our heart—it is transportable—wherever we go
 - 4. When we hide God’s word in our heart—it (and He) abides with us—and we abide in it
 - 5. This shapes our lives into a ‘becoming’ pattern of obedience
 - 6. And the perfect law—sets us free—and is setting us free
 - a. At once from sin and death—justified and sanctified totally
 - b. In an ongoing process of renouncing sin and becoming obedient—justifying and sanctifying daily
- c. Contrasting results—forgetful hearers or effectual doers—v 25
- 1. If we are not doers—we become forgetful hearers
 - a. If we don’t do what we hear—we quickly forget what we have heard
 - b. If we don’t use it, we lose it
 - b. If we don’t practice it, we never really learn how to use it
 - 2. If we obey—we become *effectual* doers
 - a. We *really* learn by doing—not just hearing—we learn how to put things into practice
 - b. Like many drills in life
 - o Practice spelling for the spelling Bee
 - o Scripture memorization
 - o Sports practice before the game—drill over and over
 - c. Doing—instills the spiritual habit of obedience
 - o Strengthens our character, resolve, and skills/abilities to act godly
 - o Enables us to react instinctively the right way—when under stress and pressure

III. Obeying God’s Word (1:19-27)

A. The right conditions (1:19-21)

- 1. The right attitude (1:19-20)**
- 2. The right reception (1:21)**

B. The right behavior: doing and not just hearing (1:22-25)

C. The right standards (1:26-27)

- 1. Empty religion (1:26)**
- 2. True religion (1:27)**

C. The right standards (1:26-7)

KJV—26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion [is] vain. 27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, [and] to keep himself unspotted from the world.

NIV—26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

NASB—26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man's religion is worthless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

1. THE SUBJECT is—being ‘religious’—and true ‘religion’

a. ‘religious’—v 26 = **θησικος**

- Trembling or fearing
- Fearing or worshipping God
- [It is used only here in the NT]

b. ‘religion’—vv 26-27 = **θησικεια**

- Religious worship
- External ceremonies of religion
 - Paul spoke of being a Pharisee—a sect of his ‘religion’—i.e. Judaism—**Acts 26:5**
 - We are warned not to worship—give religious devotion—to angels—**Col 2:18**

c. Summary

1. Being ‘religious’ is an attitude before God—worshipful and awestruck at His Person and power
2. This should translate to actions in a structured form—a ‘religion’—with outward actions
3. One’s outward actions (religion) come from inward attitudes (religious)
4. Implication: the outward action should match the inward attitude—and vice versa

2. TWO TYPES of ‘religion’ exist

a. Empty religion = vain religion

1. **ματαιος** = void of force—truth—success—result

- Empty
- Useless—of no purpose

2. Other passages where it is used

- I Cor 15:17—*and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is **worthless**; you are sill in your sins*
- I Pe 1:18-19—*knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from you **futile** way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*

3. Summary—Religion that is powerless—of no purpose—aimless—ineffective

b. True religion = genuine religion

1. It is defined as two things

a. pure = **καθαρος**

- Purified by fire = cauterized
- Pruned of excess vegetation
- Clean
- Free from corruption—guiltless, blameless innocent
 - **Mt 5:8**—*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God*
 - **Jn 15:3**—*Now you are clean through the word which I have spoke to you*

b. undefiled = **αμιαντος**

- Unsoiled—clean
- Free of anything that would deform it
- Free of anything that would diminish its force
 - **Heb 7:26**—*For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, **undefiled**, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens*
 - **I Pe 1:4**—*[we have been born again to a living hope]—to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and **undefiled** and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.*

c. Summary—Religion that is blameless/clean and not deformed but still powerful and effective

3. FALSE RELIGION

a. Is only an appearance of things—not the real thing

1. **KJV**—translates **δοκεω** best

- Something ‘seems’ to be—‘appears’ to be
- But is not really what it looks like on the surface
- This is the root word for ‘doceticism’—the idea that Christ only appeared to be human

2. **NIV** and **NASB**—makes this reflexive—what one seems to be to himself—thinks of himself

3. But the accurate translation is—“if one seems to be”—to anyone, to others and to himself

4. If anyone looks at this person—he *seems* to be one way

5. But the reflexive emphasis comes from the latter part of the verse—he deceives himself
- b. What is this ‘religion’ that is called into question?
1. It involves at least four dimensions
 - Obedience to the word of God—keeping the commandments of God
 - Acts of righteousness
 - Behavior that is pleasing to God
 - Qualities of holiness consistent with God’s character
 2. Typically, in Judaism—and early Christianity—these were three ‘acts of righteousness.’
 - Almsgiving—giving to the poor and needy
 - Prayer
 - Fasting
 3. In Christian terms—behavior pleasing to God is showing the fruit of the spirit—Gal 5:22-23
 4. In Christian terms—holiness consistent with God’s character = e.g. the ‘whatsoevers’ of Ph 4:8
- c. What is a key indicator when one is not truly ‘religious’
1. James singles out one thing—the inability to manage one’s tongue
 2. Jewish tradition behind this command to control the tongue—examples:
 - **Ps 34:13**—*Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit*
 - **Ps 39:1**—*I said, ‘I will guard my ways that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle while the wicked are in my presence.*
 3. Because of the damage the tongue can do—**Ja 3:6-8**
 - A raging fire
 - Can defile the whole body—of a single person—or the body of the church
 - A poison
 4. This is one of the most obvious external indicators of what is going on inside a person
 5. But if one *can* control the tongue—he is ‘perfect in every way, able to bridle the whole body’—**Ja 3:2**
- d. If we cannot control the tongue
1. Then we are not in control of our body—our character—our behavior
 2. Then everything else is just a ‘show’—a sham covering up what is really inside
 3. Then we deceive ourselves—our own hearts—i.e. to the very core
 - We come to believe that our external pious actions are good enough
 - We listen to praise of others—when they overlook our duplicity—and flatter us
 - We dismiss or justify our use of the tongue with all kinds of excuses
 - We measure our piety by external actions—not internal character
- e. Notice the practical emphasis here—also in relation to faith

1. James has already said be **doers** of the word and not **hearers** only—**1:22**
 2. What we **do** indicates—to a large degree—whether are genuinely followers of God
 3. Later, James will say our **actions** are an indication of whether or not we really have ‘faith’
 4. So—this verse is highly significant for those who say they have faith
 5. If we say we have—but cannot control our tongues—this impugns our faith *out of our very mouths*
- f. This type of false religion
- Can be very pious in *ritual* and *doctrine*
 - But is devoid of *character* and *behavior*
 - It is an external shell that ‘appears’ to be all right
 - But is really empty—devoid of any moral and ethical power

4. TRUE RELIGION

- a. Is not measured by our subjective opinions—what we ‘think’ or what ‘appears’ right
- b. It is measured by God—“in the sight of God”
 1. God knows whether the outside matches the inside—or whether it is just a show
 2. God measures this by what is *pure* and *undefiled*—measurements of *character* and *behavior*
- c. What is assumed here
 1. God expects the very least of what is mentioned in the previous verse
 2. We should control our tongues—that is given
 3. We should manifest true piety of character, bridle our bodies, and behave in a holy manner
- d. Beyond this—there is further evidence of true religion
 - o Visit orphans and widows in their distress
 - o Keep oneself unstained by the world
- e. Why visit orphans and widows?
 1. They are examples of the ‘helpless’—like the foreigner, and others less fortunate
 2. God is a helper of those in distress—who commands us to do the same

Dt 10:18-19—*God executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.*
 3. To show compassion for the helpless—reflects God’s character—and obedience to our Father
 4. James is also setting the stage for chapter 2—how to treat those of less privilege—fairness in the Church
- f. What is the significance of ‘keeping ourselves unstained by the world’?

1. It is not enough to manifest piety and holiness—and rest on our laurels—this is not a static state of being
2. We must remain diligent to guard against corruption—there are constant assaults from the world
3. It is an active process of *becoming* like Christ—who is the lamb without blemish (**I Pe 1:19**)
4. We are commanded to be vigilant and diligent in this process
 - **II Pe 3:14**—*Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless . . .*
 - **I Tim 6:11,13-14**—*But flee from these things [evil things of worldliness], you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness . . . I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
5. Jesus said we are [to be] *in the world but not of the world*—**Jn 17: 11, 16**