

Welcome to: - Bible House of Grace.



God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

James 1.

(2013)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man. As to such I neither claim special knowledge or perfect understanding.

If you think items presented on this site to be in error, please let me know and I will gladly reconsider the content.

James 1.

INTRODUCTION: James is commonly referred to as the Proverbs of the New Testament. It practically and faithfully reminds Christians how to live and covers topics such as perseverance, true faith, controlling the tongue, submitting to God's will and having patience. James aids readers in living authentically and wisely for Christ it is one of the earliest of the New Testament writings (A.D. 40–50). It is believed to have been written by Jesus' brother James. Many have claimed that James and the apostle Paul differed on the question of faith versus works, but in reality the spiritual fruit that James talks about is the outward evidence of inward faith. James gives us a picture of what inward Christian faith looks like practically on the outside it demonstrates the true faith of which Paul wrote. James and Paul's writings rather than being contradictory beautifully complement each other.

Topics.

- Count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds.
- If any lack wisdom let them ask God.
- The one who doubts is like a wave of the sea tossed by the wind.
- Let the lowly boast in their exaltation and the rich in their humiliation.
- Sins origins are not in God, but in other causes.
- Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.
- Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.
- Be doers of the word, and not hearers only.
- Looking in a mirror and forgetting what we look like.
- Religion that is pure and undefiled before God.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

The Twelve Tribes in the Dispersion.

James 1:1 ----- ¹James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion (scattered in KJV): Greetings.

Dispersion: (Scattered in KJV) refers to Jews which were scattered into Gentile countries and foreign lands.

During the Old Testament Israel as a nation turned from the LORD their God to serve idols and worship pagan gods and entered into extremely gross sins so God used Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon as his servant to bring Gods judgment on Israel. The armies of Babylon invaded the Jews beloved city Jerusalem, destroyed their Temple and took them captive for 70 years. At the end of this seventy-year captivity many Jews under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, but many others had established homes in Gentile lands during their seventy-year captivity.

It is to these Jews and the many other Jewish families who had established homes in Gentile towns and countries throughout the following generations that James is writing to. Despite Jews living in foreign lands they still held fast to their Jewish faith, their customs and their culture and manner of dress which made it clear to anyone that they were Jews dwelling amongst Gentile people. James being the brother of Jesus was a Jew and was no-doubt (as Paul was) greatly concerned for

the people of Israel especially those who had converted to Christ. Jews living outside the safety of their own land and their own people often suffered mockery and persecution because of their faith. It is to these Jews that James is writing this letter of encouragement, but this does not mean that his message is limited to the Jews only since all Christians also live in a foreign land, their citizenship is not of this world, but of heaven and in the same way that many Jews suffered, mockery, rejection and persecution so to do many who stand fast for their faith in Christ.

Their persecution maybe rejection of family or friends, mockery of peers, lack of promotion at work, persecution of governments or opposing religions and such like things so this letter by extension applies to everyone Jew or Gentile who is devoted and faithful to God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Count it all Joy when you Meet Trials of Various Kinds.

James 1:2-4 -----²Count it all joy, my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

The expression, "My brothers" in this context refers to James kinsmen the Jews. The Jewish nation viewed a Jewish man or woman as a brother regardless of their belief or whether they were female or male. It is an ancient expression that shows a kindred spirit, either as belonging to the same family, the same nation or the same faith.

During the ancient Roman era even women (especially those who had authority) were referred to as brothers by the Romans, likewise in Christ's time the word, brothers was not limited in its use to men only, but included both men and women. This is because it was an expression that signified a person belonged to the same family, the same faith, the same nation or the same group of people etc., and was not used to differentiate between male and females during the Roman and New Testament era unless the context specifically states it. Brothers was a perfect expression for those in Christ since, brotherly love is love that protects, defends, guards and shelters and is free from any romantic thought.

The Testing of Faith.

Peter wrote: -

- The tested genuineness of our faith is more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire and prays that it will be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:7).

It is easy to praise God when life is blessed and charmed, even much of the unbelieving world thank God when good things come to them. The real test is when hardships, sorrows and troubles come, it is these moments that true faith is evidenced, those who understand God as Job of the Old Testament did endure the hardship, remain in faith and continue to praise God despite the sorrow life brings on this side of Christ's return. In contrast to those who faith is deeply rooted are those who turn bitter against God and forsake their faith the moment troubles come.

God's family is very much like a natural family; children who know they are loved by their parents do not turn against them, simply because they go through difficult times. Though hardships (loss of a parent, loss of a job, loss of a home by fire, earthquakes, tornados etc., the illness or death of a family member etc.), may make a family's life enormously difficult and fill it with overwhelming sorrow, it does not affect the love between the Parents and the children. Likewise true faith in God will not be affected by troublesome times. This is because the faith of those who love Christ is not based on their good or bad circumstances in this life, but on the Lord Jesus Christ's willingness to lay his life down for their eternal salvation.

Jesus himself said: -

- Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends. (John 15:13).

Those who stand faithful to the Lord do so because they know him as their friend in the same way that he calls them his friend.

Count it all Joy.

The words, "Count trials joy" (v2) is in the context of our faith being tested, which means it's in the context of being persecuted in some manner because of our faith. James is saying when you are being riled for your faith don't despair, but rather count it joy because the fact that you are remaining faithful during it is storing up treasure in heaven that Christ will hand out when he returns.

If any Lack Wisdom let them Ask God.

James 1:5 -----⁵If any of you lacks wisdom let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Though wisdom in general is needed in all areas of our life and it is certainly proper and right to pray that God would give us wisdom to make right choices and right decisions, but the wisdom James is speaking of in this verse is in the context of enduring "Trials of various kinds" (v2) and of our "Faith being tested" (v3). It is in the context of accepting our trials with joy because they are testing our faith and will produce patience, steadfastness and endurance so that eventually we will be made perfect and lack nothing (v4).

It appears to me that in this context the wisdom we are to ask for is the wisdom that is best suited to help us cope with whatever is shaking our faith it is the wisdom best suited for the trial, persecution, suffering and hardship etc., that we are facing so that our faith does not fail and that in the midst of our trial we remain a good testimony to God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

God Gives Generously to all Without Reproach.

The words, "God gives generously to all" (v5) means regardless of whether a person who is suffering for their faith is a descendant of Abraham, a Hebrew or Jew, noble or lowly, rich or poor or is born of a Gentile nation God will give wisdom to endure their particular trial and the words, "Without reproach" (v5) means God will not judge whoever comes to Him seeking this wisdom no-matter how low their faith is or how much it is being shaken.

Remember the Jews James is writing to were living in Gentile nations amongst Gentile people it is certain many had taken Gentile woman and men for their husbands and wives. The Jews that had the religious authority at Jerusalem saw themselves as the elite of God, they considered the Gentiles nations as an unclean people without God, and no-doubt looked down upon their fellow Jews who were raising their children amongst people who they not only considered to be unclean, but also inferior to themselves and of lessor value to God.

It is almost certain that because of the elitist self-righteous attitude of many of the religious leaders at Jerusalem during this time that the Jewish people living outside of their nation and who could not attend the regular ceremonial rites and religious Jewish customs and traditions felt a sense of unworthiness before God.

James is saying to these Jews and by extension to everyone seeking God that it matters not what society or what group of people a person lives and works amongst if they seek God with an honest heart and ask him for wisdom to strengthen their faith in times of hardship God without any judgment regardless of their circumstances will answer their prayer.

Clearly we should all ask for wisdom: -

- To behave right under temptations and afflictions.
- To be a good reflection of Christ to those outside and inside God's Kingdom.
- To determine the things that are best suited for us to overcome temptations.

- To remain faithful whether in poverty or great wealth.
- To be a doer of God's word and not just a hearer only.
- To bring peace amongst fights and quarrels.
- To discern what is of the flesh and of the Spirit.
- To humble ourselves and submit to God and know the right thing to do.
- To control the tongue (i.e., what we say) and speak words of encouragement.
- To count it all joy when facing trials and let patience accomplish its perfect work.

All these are right and proper to pray for, but the key idea behind the wisdom James is telling us to pray for is about praying for wisdom during times of temptations, hardships and troubles so we know how to act and deal wisely in them. It is about, knowing and being fully assured that when the work of patience is complete, it will furnish us with all that is necessary to gain the victory of faith in the battle of warfare and finish our Christian race to receive the royal crown of glory and everlasting life.

The one who Doubts is like a Wave of the Sea Tossed by the Wind.

James 1:6-8 ----- ⁶But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

For the best reference of what the words "A double-minded man" refers to we only have to fast forward to James chapter four. Here James tells us the following facts about a double minded person: -

- They have a war within because of wrongful passions and desires (Jas. 4:1).
- They covet things they cannot have (Jas 4:2).
- They ask with the wrong motive (i.e. to gratify self, ego and pride) (Jas. 4:3).
- They have a friendship with the world (i.e., they love the pleasures and materialist things of the world) which is opposed to the spiritual things of God (Jas 4:4).
- They are prideful and arrogant (God resist the proud) ((Jas. 4:1-4).
- They do not submit to God's ways, but follow the ways of the world (Jas. 4:7).
- They gossip and speak against their brothers and sisters in Christ (Jas. 4:11).
- They judge their neighbour (James 4:12) (God says, who are we to judge our neighbour) (Jas. 4:12).
- They focus on business and profit (self-reward and gain) (Jas. 4:13).
- They boast in their own achievements and their worldly success (Jas. 4:15).

In chapter four James tells us that Christians who have these attitudes are double minded (v4:8). He tells them to humble themselves before the Lord mourn and weep (Jas. 4:9) and God will exalt them (v10). He warns them to be doers themselves of the law in contrast to judging people by it (v11-12) and instead of trusting in themselves they should live with the mindset, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that (v11-15) in contrast to trusting and boasting in their own abilities which they were doing.

SUMMARY: being double minded is about having a faith in Christ, but still being attached to the things of this world.

This does not mean we should not work for what we need materialistically to provides shelter for our families and their needs, rather being double minded is about craving after things we don't need, it's about craving to fulfil the desires and passions of self, ego and pride etc., rather than making the principals of God the highest priority of life. It is about living to satisfy 'self' and taking no thought for others (especially our brothers and sisters in Christ).

Whoever doubts is like a Wave Driven and Tossed by the Wind.

The words, "Let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind" (v6) is in the context of being double minded and facing trials of various kinds that test our faith (v2-3) so the asking in focus is primarily about asking God for wisdom to do whatever is best for the particular circumstance we are facing at that time so that we endure with strength and courage through it and remain a good testimony to God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let the Lowly Boast in their Exaltation and the Rich in their Humiliation.

James 1:9-11 ----- ⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Let the Lowly Boast in their Humiliation: lowly in this context refers to the common people, the poor and those who live in humble, depressed circumstances in contrast to the noble, those in high places of authority and those who live in luxury, riches and wealth. The lowly are to boast in the glorious truth that through their faith in Christ and God's grace God has crowned and clothed them with the royal robes of Jesus righteousness and they will inherit eternal life and everlasting glory.

Let the Rich Boast in their Humiliation: let the rich boast in their humiliation means that they should boast in the truth that no-matter how rich or wealthy they are it counts for nothing in regards to eternal life. Even the richest on earth cannot buy eternal life with their money. The humiliation of the rich is that no matter how much wealth they have they cannot escape the grave. Their worldly wealth is a withering thing, knowing that their money adds nothing to their salvation, since it is completely dependent on faith in Christ and God's grace should keep those who are wealthy, rich and living lives of luxury humble.

NOTE.

Though almost all New Testament verses that speak about literal riches and wealth speak about it negativity, James is not saying that it is wrong for a Christian to be rich and wealthy. When the Bible speaks of money negativity it is not the money that is sinful (it is neither good nor bad since it is just paper) rather it is the love of money that is sinful for two reasons: -

1. Because the affections are set on money and profit rather than on God and those who love money trust in their abundant wealth rather than upon God for their inner joy, contentment, comfort and security.
2. Because the outward manifestation of the love of money is selfish-ambition, greed and indulgent luxurious living, those who love money spend it to gratify self, ego, pride and greed rather than use their abundance to help the poor and less fortunate and for this reason their wealth will be their undoing. They may remain saved to eternal life, but there is no-doubt they will suffer loss at the judgment seat of Christ as Paul taught in the following verses: -
 - If anyone builds on the foundation (the Lord Jesus Christ) with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, they will receive a reward, but if anyone's work is burned up, they will suffer loss, though they themselves will be saved, but only as through fire (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

Money is not sinful or evil it can be used for good or for bad, to help the poor or to spoil and pamper oneself in an indulgent lifestyle, it is the purpose it is used for that determines whether the money is good or bad, not the money itself. There are no-doubt certain brothers and sisters in the family of Christ who God has blessed with a business mind and the skills needed to turn everything they do into great success and great wealth.

For those who are humble before God and have the Spirit of Christ this is a great blessing since they are then not only able to extend the Kingdom of God by supporting those gifted in proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel of Christ, but are also able to help the poor in ways that many of us are unable to do.

When riches and abundance of money is used in this fashion it is storing up eternal treasures in heaven for those who have not set their hearts upon greed and profit, but used their blessing to advance God Kingdom and help the poor.

Blessed is those who Remain Steadfast under Trial.

James 1:12 ----- ¹²Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

This is why James says, counts it all joy (v2) when facing trials, troubles and hardships that test not only the genuineness of our faith, but also the genuineness of our love because God will give to all who love His Son a crown of life and Jesus himself said those who endure hardships for his name's sake: -

- Will eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God (Rev. 2:7).
- Will be granted the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).
- Will not be hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:11).
- Will rule over the nations (Rev. 2:26-27).

Let No-One Say they are Tempted by God.

James 1:13-15 ----- ¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

It is recorded in the Bible that God tempted Abraham, the Israelites in the wilderness, Job and tempts all His faithful and righteous ones, but not one of these temptations were temptations to sin.

These temptations were: -

- To Abraham to try his faith his love and his obedience
- To the Israelite in the wilderness to humble them and prove what was in their hearts
- To Job to try his faith and patience and prove that a person with true faith will not curse God even under great suffering.
- To all God's faithful and righteous ones, to test the genuineness of their 'FAITH' which is more precious than gold.

Clearly the word temptation carries two meanings: -

1. To trials and hardships of life and its circumstances used by God to test the genuineness of our love and faith.
2. To enticement to sin.

It appears that James felt there maybe a danger that some might consider the word temptation as used in the previous verses to mean that God arranged trials to influence the mind to temptations of sin so to guard the meaning of what he has said regarding trials, hardships and troubles of life and to make sure that the word temptation is not confused or misapplied James says: -

- Let no-one say God is tempting them to sin (v13).

Clearly showing that God would never induce or allure anyone to sin and that God places nothing before any human being with a view to induce them to do wrong. This statement of James is one of the most positive and unambiguous of all the declarations in the Bible, and one of the most important.

The Bible clearly teaches God: -

- Is Holy and that there is no darkness in Him.
- Does not delight in sin, but hates and abhors it.
- Sin is totally contrary to his nature.

Sins Origins are not in God, but in Other Causes.

Every man and woman carry in their own bodies' sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that forever seek opportunity to stir up sin within the mind and the heart which if allowed to take root and grow flows through sinful passions and on outward to corrupt behaviour it is through the passions of self, ego pride, lust and greed etc., and desire for selfish gratification that we are tempted toward sin. The heart is carried by self-gratification from that which is good and enticed to sin to satisfy whatever sensual or worldly thing, self-lusts or craves after.

The Path of Sin.

Sin in embryo form exists in the mind and heart and is brought forth outwardly if allowed to grow to its full size inwardly, to stop sins complete expression of outward sin it should be killed in its embryo form. If not it is strengthened in the mind and then by frequent acts which eventually settle into a habit. Clearly the lusts of our own hearts' are our tempters and if we allow them by degrees to carry us away from our faith and away from Christ then we prove ourselves our own destroyers.

NOTE.

The devil in other scriptures is called the tempter, and Peter tells us to: -

- Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

And in Genesis we are told: -

- Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it (Gen. 4:7).

This shows us that the devil and sin are the same entity it is that entity within us that is prone toward sin and entice us away from God. No-one can blame their sin on the devil since the devil is simply a personification of that within our own hearts that draws us to sin and act against God's will.

Neither the devil nor any other person or thing is to be blamed or used to excuse ourselves of sinning because the true origin of sin and temptation is in our own hearts.

For further information on see the title: -

- Devil.
- In Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The Progression of Sin.

A sinful temptation that appeals to the human desires entices, seduces and lures its victim, the mind is captured and possessed by the sinful temptation and chooses to act and the sinful desire is conceived. The desire then becomes an outward action and is given birth and begins to grow, when fully grown it brings forth death. It leads to death for two reasons: -

- A lifestyle of sin leads away from God.
- It is impossible to live a lifestyle of sinful behaviour and abide in Christ at the same time (Jas. 1:13-5).

Following is a list of sins James mentions throughout these five chapters: -

- Being double minded, boasting, anger and wickedness of all kinds.
- Being a hearer of the word and not a doer of it.
- Showing partiality and favouritism in regards to judgment of others.
- Not fulfilling the Royal Law, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."
- Not showing people grace mercy and love (especially those in Christ).
- Not helping the poor and the less fortunate when able.
- Bad language and speaking evil against another brother or sister in Christ.
- Causing disorder, strife, contention quarrels and fights.
- Being full of pride, bitter jealousy and selfish-ambition and coveting.
- Boasting of what we will achieve in the future without any sense of God.
- Setting our affections on the world rather than on God.
- Setting our love on riches and storing up abundant treasures for the last days.
- Cheating workers from their wages and oppressing others for one's own gain.
- Living in excessive luxury and self-indulgence.
- Condemning those who are faithful and stand for justice and what is right.

Every Good Gift and Every Perfect Gift is from Above.

James 1:16-18 ----- ¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

The words: -

- Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow (v17).

Are in the context of trials and hardships of life that test our faith, of temptations that entice to sin and of wisdom to overcome both and remain faithful to God. Therefore the good gift that comes from above refers to everything that is right and good. The words: -

- Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures (v18).

Refer to the nation of Israel. James to encourage the scattered Jews is saying that their nation Israel was chosen by God to be His people not because of their righteousness, but because of His own will. They were given spiritual birth (born again) by God's own will and in this sense were a kind of firstfruits to the family God would establish in Christ. Therefore since God chose Israel not because of their righteousness they should not think that they are lessor in Gods sight simply because they are living amongst Gentile nations and cannot attend the Jewish ceremonial rites and religious customs and traditions at Jerusalem.

Let every One be Quick to Hear, Slow to Speak, Slow to Anger.

James 1:19-21 ----- ¹⁹Know this, my beloved brothers let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Though the words, "My beloved brothers" refers to the scattered Jews, what James is saying applies to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

James has clearly explained in the previous verses that sin comes from within our own hearts and is waiting for opportunities to pounce like a roaring lion to devour us and others so he now warns us all to be quick to hear meaning always be open to listen to what a person is saying or teaching, but if it offends us be slow to anger because it causes quarrels and arguments which do not produce righteousness, but rather, contentions, strife and divisions which all come from below.

NOTE: the words, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness" (v21) refers to all the things listed in under the title 'The Progression of Sin' (following verse fifteen).

Receive with Meekness the Implanted Word.

Implanted: (Engrafted in KJV) carries the idea of something that is planted germinating growing and sprouting and spring up to produce fruit that leads to eternal life. The implanted word (v21) refers to the words and Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life being believed and taking root in the heart and mind. It refers to those who humble themselves in repentance before God and accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. It is when this word of faith is engraved on the mind and heart that sinners are pardoned, redeemed, forgiven and saved to eternal life.

Be Doers of the Word.

James 1:22-25 ----- ²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror (glass in KJV). ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Liberty: means freedom i.e., a free citizen, freedom from slavery and bondage. In this context it means being free from the obligation of strictly adhering to Moses laws of purification and ceremonial rites and Jewish religious customs and practises. This is because the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ made the entire Levitical priesthood with its ceremonial laws and religious practises obsolete and the 'perfect law of liberty' states that there is no law for those who walk in the Spirit, meaning the fruits of the Spirit i.e., love of which there is no law against.

In love there is total liberty because love does no harm, love protects and is kind, compassionate forgiving and shows grace and mercy, thus the reason it is called the perfect law of liberty meaning freedom from all religious acts to earn righteousness that leads to eternal life and freedom from the law because nothing done in love, breaks any laws and therefore whatever is done in love will bring reward and not judgment.

Be doers of the Word, and not Hearers Only.

The command to be "Doers of the word" (v22) does not refer to the practice of ceremonial rites, religious customs and traditions, but to love, it means show compassion, kindness, mercy grace and forgiveness to others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ, being doers of the word is not about the practise of outward religious acts, but about walking in the fruits of the Spirit.

Self-Deception.

Though no-one is saved by works or self-effort, true faith will always produce some form of outward evidence of inward faith. James is saying if a person says they believe in God, but have no outward actions to evidence their inward faith they are deceiving themselves, he is not teaching that we are saved by self-effort or outward works, but that a truly saved person will be recognised by their speech because of the absence of gossip, criticism, swearing, cussing and blaspheming etc., and because of their good testimony.

He is teaching that a true brother or sister in Christ will be recognised by their love, grace, mercy, kindness and willingness to forgive etc., in contrast to being critical, resentful, bitter, angry, unforgiving and such like things. James is saying that in this manner actions reveal a person's true faith or the lack of it.

Looking in a Mirror and Forgetting what we Look Like.

Glass: the word glass here means mirror, amongst the ancients glass was not commonly used, but rather highly polished plates of metal.

James in likening a person who hears the word, but does not do it to "A man who looks intently at his face in a mirror and goes away and forgets what he was like" (v24) is referring to the fact that we do not retain a distinct impression of ourselves after we have looked in a mirror. While actually looking in the mirror, we see all our features, the defects and blemishes, they are distinctly before the mind; but when we turn away, they are out of sight and out of mind the image and the impression both vanish.

Likewise when a person's hears the word of God it is like having a spiritual mirror held up before them; they see the perfect precepts of the law and the perfect requirements of the Gospel and see their own short-comings and defects and perhaps think that they will correct them. But when they turn away they are immediately forgotten it is in this sense they are like a person who looks intently at their face in a mirror and immediately go away and forget what they looked like.

James is saying that pure religion is not counted worthy simply because a person may have their theology correct, they must also be a doer of the word otherwise all their theology will be counted worthless. For our religion to be considered pure we must not only desire to remove the blemishes and defects in our own character that the word of God reveals to us, but also do-good to others.

Bridling the Tongue and Worthless Religion.

James 1:26 ----- ²⁶If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

Religious: in this context refers to any man or woman who confesses to believe in God. James is saying, it matters not whether we: -

- Stand in church every Sunday with our hands raised in worship to the Lord.
- Strictly partake of the communal emblems of bread and wine.
- Faithfully read our Bibles every-day.
- Singing in a church choir, teaching Sunday school or proclaiming the Scriptures.
- Or hold fast to any other religious duty or activity.

If we cannot control our own tongue, not only from swearing, cussing, and blaspheming, but from gossiping, backbiting, demeaning and degrading others etc., our religion is worthless. This is because true Christianity is not about outward religious activities, but living a life that brings a good testimony to God and the Lord Jesus Christ and doing-good not only to those in the family of Christ, but also to those outside of it.

Religion that is Pure and Undefined before God.

James 1:27 ----- 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

The orphans, widows and those who are afflicted are symbols of the poor, the less fortunate and those struggling with life. During Jesus and James era the religious leaders of Israel considered themselves far too noble and important to step out of their holy robes and high positions of authority and humble themselves by associating with such a lowly class of people. Here James (the brother of Jesus) is saying it is not being at the top of a religious empire that is evidence of pure religion but helping the less fortunate, which means no-one has to have a certificate of approval by any religious institution or organisation to practise pure religion since helping and doing-good to others is within everyone's power (howbeit some more than others), but it matters not how small a brother or sister is able to help since it is the attitude and desire to help that God will count worthy (consider the poor widows penny (Mark 12:41-44).

Pure religion has the following two aspects: -

1. Doing-good to the poor and the less fortunate it is helping others were we are able, especially those who are physically, financially, emotionally or spiritually struggling.
2. Not having affection for the things of the world that are sinful or that bring a bad testimony to God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The greatest two commandments in the entire Bible are: -

1. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
2. You shall love your neighbour as yourself (Matt. 22:37-39).

This is pure religion the command, "Love your neighbour as yourself," means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself. The thing God hates the most is when we do harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, mentally, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do-good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land.

Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Micah says: -

- What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God (Micah 6:5-10).

Isaiah tells us: -

- The LORD loves justice and hates robbery and wrong doing (Isaiah 61:8).

Jeremiah says: -

- Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah not only clearly show what pure religion is, but also that the people the LORD loves are not only those who acknowledge God, but who also uphold justice, do not lie, deceive or make promises they do not intend to keep, but speak the truth, do what is right, show respect and give help to others when able and make choices that lead to peace. These are the things the LORD calls pure religion and the things He delights in and that will bring His favour and reward.

Jesus Sermon on the Mount.

The constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive. Here pure religion is about doing all we can do to protect people from harm and being dominated by the thought, "What action can I take or do that will help and encourage this person." It is all about doing-right to others, thus the reason the message Jesus spoke on the mountain is referred to as, "The Famous Sermon" because the principals if followed not only by Christians, but all humanity are the only way to peace (Matthew 5).

For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see: -

- Matthew 5 in Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

End.