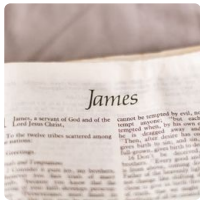


# OpenTheo

## James Introduction, 1:1 - 1:8



### James - Steve Gregg

In this analysis of the Book of James by Steve Gregg, the author's focus on practical instructions for godly living is discussed. Drawing a comparison to Martin Luther's emphasis on faith over works, Gregg notes that James' teachings are heavily influenced by Jesus' Sermon Mount. While there is a strong tradition that James, brother of Jesus, authored the book, there is not much evidence to support this. The book is considered to be akin to the Book of Proverbs, emphasizing the importance of true faith and the trials that come with it.

### Transcript

...as many as five, if we need that many. So during the summer, I taught through James, took about 12 sessions. Going through it, we will not take that long.

I don't know whether we'll take up all five at this point, that are scheduled this year for or not. The Book of James is kind of a neat book. Some people really like it.

In fact, for some people it's one of their favorite books, and for others it's about their least favorite book. It stands out among the epistles as being more intensely practical than some. Though I don't mean to imply that the other epistles are not practical.

I don't think there's any epistle in the Bible that doesn't give practical instructions for godly living. But I guess the thing about James is that you have only that, only practical instructions for godly living. You don't have much in the way of theology laid out.

Whereas Paul will take maybe half of a short epistle to lay out a theological foundation, and then will spend the other half of the time that he has giving a practical application. James gets practical right from the beginning and stays that way all the way through. James is mostly famous for his passage in chapter 2 about faith and works.

It's probably one of the great controversies in church history. It's centered around this passage and its meaning, and particularly how it harmonizes with Paul's teaching on the subject of faith. Because James indicates that faith without works is dead, that Abram was justified by works as well as faith, that Abraham was justified by works as well as

faith, and that a person who claims to have faith but does not have works is a liar or has simply got a false hope and believes himself to be a Christian and is not really one.

Most of us, I'm sure, are familiar with the passage in James chapter 2 where this discussion is found. And it was, of course, one of the main features of the Reformation that Martin Luther sparked was the emphasis on justification by faith alone. And if we can understand the temper of the times in which Luther's Reformation took place, the Roman Catholic Church had pretty much added an awful lot to the requirements for salvation.

In addition to believing in Christ, you had to be baptized, you had to fulfill certain sacraments, you had to do a lot of things that Martin Luther regarded to be works. And because of that, when he discovered in Paul's writings the statement that the just shall live by faith, then Martin Luther felt that faith and not works is what needs to be emphasized, and I think correctly so. I think we are all quite thankful for what Luther came up with there.

He certainly changed the Church and probably for the better, I would say. Some would not always agree quite to the same extent as to how good the Reformation was for its fruit, but it does seem like it was a boon for the body of Christ that Martin Luther rediscovered this truth from Paul's writings. And yet he struggled with change, because Luther's emphasis may have been a bit of a pendulum swing from the Roman Catholic Church that he was rebelling against, or that he was seeking to reform.

And that is human nature. It shouldn't surprise us that good men might swing a little too far in the opposite direction when reacting to something. And the Roman Catholic Church at that time was very legalistic, put a lot of stress on performance and observation of ritual and things like that as means of salvation.

And as soon as Luther discovered that faith was the issue for justification and nothing else, of course that became his big emphasis. And if you know how the dynamics of controversy function, you know that when you react to something and then they fight you back, then you solidify your position more, and in the heat of the controversy you get to the place where it's more damaging to acknowledge anything that your opponent is saying. You have to pretty much polarize more and more.

And I think that that may have happened in the case of Martin Luther, because he came to a place where he really did not like any kind of stress on Christian works with reference to salvation at all. And with reference to the epistle of James, Luther didn't like this epistle. Of course, a lot of people of Luther's persuasion have felt that James is something of a sub-Christian epistle, not fully belonging in the New Testament.

They have some reference for it because it's in the New Testament, but they also feel like somehow, unlike other epistles, it is not quite fully up to snuff as far as what

Christianity represents and what it should represent. Luther himself called James a right-strawy epistle. Strawy from the word straw.

Some people quote Luther as saying it was an epistle of straw, suggesting it wasn't of much value. And if I'm not mistaken, I believe that when Martin Luther translated the Bible into German, he rearranged the books to a certain extent and put James at the end, perhaps hoping that those who didn't have the discipline to read through the whole Bible might never get to it. I don't know.

But he didn't have much love for Luther, James, it seems. Now that doesn't seem to be justified as I understand New Testament theology. It seems like James and Paul are not at opposite poles.

I believe that James and Paul have different emphases, but I believe that their belief about justification by faith is the same belief in both cases. James emphasizing one aspect and Paul emphasizing another. The time for us to illustrate that will probably come when we come to James chapter 2, not at this point.

But because of Luther's reaction to James, many Christians have felt James may not be all that much worth. Others, however, who have not been very much affected by Luther's attitude, have found James to be one of their favorite epistles because it is so down-to-earth and practical and tells you exactly what you should do. As a matter of fact, it's just as practical as the Sermon on the Mount, from which it takes most of its thoughts.

There is no epistle in the Bible, I think, that has as many quotes or allusions to the Sermon on the Mount as this epistle. The author was very much affected by James' Sermon on the Mount. It's a fairly short epistle, only five chapters long, and yet over 20 times I have found at least 20 cases.

I've never found any commentator that listed these, but I've got them listed because I decided to try to. Some years ago I noticed that there were a great number of allusions and even some outright quotes from the Sermon on the Mount in this epistle. And the more I read it, the more of them I saw, and I thought, well, I ought to make a comprehensive list of them.

So far, I've been able to list about 20 places in James where he alludes to the Sermon on the Mount, and there may be others that will come to my attention in later readings. But for an epistle this short, it's quite clear that that's a large number. It references back to what Jesus said on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 and also in Luke 6. As we go through, of course, I'll point out the parallels there.

In fact, I would suggest to you that if you read through the book of James, you look for those things yourself. I'll point them out as we talk through it, but you'll have an opportunity to read through the book before me and comment on everything. And I

would set you on your guard to look for those places where James is expounding on the Sermon on the Mount.

It seems to me this is sort of like a sermon based on the Sermon on the Mount. Maybe a sermon made more contemporary to a later generation, to a second generation of Christians. Taking the material of the Sermon on the Mount and applying it to the needs of a Christian congregation, or to the Christian congregations at a later date.

What that date would be is not known for certain, partly because there are no historical references. Any of this, except for possibly, and this will be debated, I think, in chapter 5, there are a number of references to some events, which is either a reference to the impending doom of Jerusalem, or else to the second coming of Christ. There's one of those books that has some material in it that has been interpreted with reference to the second coming of Christ, but seems to me by reference to other passages of Scripture where the language is taken from, it may be a reference to the doom of Jerusalem.

I'm referring, for example, to chapter 5, verse 3, when he's rebuking the rich men. At the end of verse 3 he says, You have heaped up treasure in the last days. And then in verse 4 it tells of God's complaint, actually the complaint of the poor, who have been oppressed by these rich people.

And it says that their cries have reached into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, an unusual term to use for God in the New Testament. A common term in the Old Testament, Sabaoth means armies, the God of armies. And the use of that term for God here in this epistle, I don't know, I don't think the term Lord of Sabaoth is used elsewhere in the New Testament.

It may be, but it's very frequently used in the Old. And Lord of Sabaoth, there at the end of chapter 5, verse 4, means the God of armies. And say to the rich that the cries of the poor that you have oppressed have entered into the ears of the God of armies.

May, in some respect, refer to the fact that the God of armies is going to send an army to vindicate those poor. And it doesn't say so necessarily. Also in verse 8 of chapter 5 it says, You also be patient, establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

The coming of the Lord, of course, could mean the second coming of Christ. If so, then it seems strange that he would have said it was at hand 2,000 years ago when it was not at hand. But if the coming of the Lord here is a reference, one of those several references, I believe, in the Bible, to not the second coming, but the coming of Christ in judgment, figuratively speaking, on the state of Israel, then that could be a reference to it here.

Also in verse 9 it says, Do not grumble one against another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the judge is standing at the door. That statement, the judge is

standing at the door, no doubt, harks back to Jesus' prediction.

When you see these things begin to come to pass, know that it is near, even at the door. Back in the Olivet Discourse, when he was talking about, so it seems, the fall of Jerusalem, because he just predicted that not one stone would be left standing on another at the temple, the disciple asked him, when will these things be? And he gave them his answer. And in the course of his answer to that, he said, When you see these things begin to come to pass, you will know that it is near, even at the door.

And so James, apparently picking up that expression from Jesus, where Jesus was, I believe, predicting the fall of Jerusalem, says, Behold, the judge is standing at the door. He could tell from the signs surrounding that the judgment was coming, and it was at the door. Well, those kinds of references may, as I said, be taken about the second coming of Christ, but if so, they seem to be mistaken.

And I'm not inclined to believe that there's any epistle in the Bible who can't make mistakes. So when he said the coming of the Lord is at hand, the judge is standing at the door, someone might well say, well, you know, the date of the Lord is like a thousand years, so it was only two thousand years off when he wrote this, that's only two days away, that's sort of at hand, that's sort of at the door. But if we're going to use that way of reasoning, then we empty the words of any meaning.

What comfort could there be in Jesus saying, when you see these things coming to pass, know that it's near, even at the doors. If at the doors could mean two thousand years away, what information has been conveyed to us by suggesting that it's near or at the doors, if in fact, to God, that's a couple thousand years off. Might as well not use the words at all.

Might as well just say it's a ways to go. Hang in there. But to suggest it's at hand, it's at the door, lift up your head, your redemption draws nigh, it seems to be encouraging people that it's not very long away for them, and that if they'll just hang in there, it'll be coming down the pike here before very long.

Now, of course, I believe God is entitled to speak with whatever kind of use of words he wishes, but I do believe he used words in such a way as to try to communicate information, just like most of us use words to do that. And therefore, if he says it's at hand, it's at the doors, it probably means it's near. Not in God's way of speaking of several thousand years near, but probably within the range of the lifetime of those people.

After all, the same people to whom Jesus said, you will know that this is at the doors, he said this generation will not pass before all these things be fulfilled. So, James, I think, very likely, was writing to maybe the first or second generation of believers. They were clearly Jewish believers, at least in my opinion they are.

He says in James 1, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, twelve tribes would suggest Jewish people. As far as there being believers is concerned, I think there's a number of reasons for believing that the audience were Christians. There's not very many places that distinctly say so, except A, the epistles written by Christian authors were usually written to Christian congregations.

It seems very unusual, it would seem very strange, that a Christian writer would write a sermon and expect non-Christian Jews to read it and put any weight in it, unless he was declaring himself to be a Jewish prophet or something, which the author does not do. However, the church would be expected to listen to its leaders. Another reason is that there is so much of the Sermon on the Mountain, that one would expect that the readers were those that were expected to comply with the Sermon on the Mountain.

We know that that sermon was addressed to Jesus' disciples, not to the world at large. And thirdly, there is one reference that seems clear enough, that the readers are Christians. Although the opening verse says the readers are the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, chapter 2, verse 1 says, This seems to assume that the readers do hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of Glory, and that they should not mix that with the tendency to show partiality.

So, the implication is that the readers do have the faith of Christ, and also, of course, there is reference in verse 7 of chapter 2, He doesn't say what that noble name is, but almost certainly means the name of Christ. So, I believe we can say that the readers were Jewish Christians. There are some who would take the twelve tribes symbolically.

I know some who think that a reference to the twelve tribes is simply a way of referring to the church as the new Israel. I don't think that's likely to be the case here, and I'll tell you why in a moment. But, in 1 Peter, there is a term that he addresses his readers by, which sounds like a Jewish term where he is not, apparently speaking, a Jewish readership.

In 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 1, 1 Peter 1.1 says, to the pilgrims of the dispersion. Now, the word dispersion here, in the Greek, is diaspora, and that was a technical term for the Jews who lived outside of Palestine. The Jews were scattered throughout the Roman world.

They were called the diaspora. And that's the term that Peter uses of his readers. I'm writing to you pilgrims of the diaspora, which was, again, like saying to the twelve tribes, or Shadrach, or what James says.

Sounds like it's a Jewish audience. However, in Peter, it's almost certainly not a Jewish audience he's addressing. It seems very clearly to be a Gentile audience.

He makes reference to their former idolatry, and the vanity of their former life, and so

forth, as in terms that seem to apply to Gentiles. He says previously they were not a people, but now they're the people of God. Certainly, the Jews could not be said to have been not a people, previously.

But, anyway, considering all the evidence, I do believe that Peter was writing to the Gentiles, and did use a Jewish term, the diaspora, symbolically, to refer to them as the real dispersed Israel in the world, the church. But I don't think James is necessarily doing that. Some think James is, and of course it might seem fair enough that if Peter does it, then James did it.

My reason, however, for believing that James is writing to actual Jews is because, first of all, if this James B., though James that it is usually believed to be, that is, the man who was the head or the leader of the Jerusalem church after Peter's departure from there, then his particular interest was with Jewish believers. Now, we haven't discussed the evidence for this man being the author, and I guess there's not much that can be said about the evidence, except there's a strong tradition that he is. As far as the name James is concerned, it was not an uncommon name among Jewish people.

In fact, it's just the Greek form of the name Jacob. And, you know, Jacob was a very famous Old Testament character, and it should not be surprising that many Jewish people may have named their children after him. And so, there might be any number of Jameses that this refers to.

He does not identify himself as an apostle, but only as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, and any Christian might call himself by that designation. So, it's not clear at all which James it is, at least not from the title. In fact, the letter has no personal or autobiographical information in it.

And if you would remove verse 1, the epistle just sounds like a sermon, or maybe several sermons put together, and not necessarily as a personal kind of an epistle at all. Nonetheless, there's no reason to detach verse 1, and because of verse 1, which is the only epistolary feature the book has, we can accept that it is an epistle from someone named James, though which James is not clear. James, the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve disciples, was the first martyr after Stephen, as far as we know.

In Acts chapter 12, Herod was stirred up against the church, and he arrested James, the head of the beheaded. That was James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. That was so early in church history that it's almost certain he didn't write this epistle.

It was just too early on, and the epistle almost certainly came up later than that. There was another, one of the twelve apostles named James, but we know nothing about him, except he was distinguished from James, the son of Zebedee, by the title The Less, James The Less. That's all we know about the guy, is he had a title called James The Less, or The Little One, I think it was translated, whether he was a smaller man than

James, the son of Zebedee, or whether he was just less important than James, the son of Zebedee, who was of course one of the inner circle of Christ, Peter, James, and John.

We don't know, but there's never been any tradition that James The Less wrote this, and if he had, you would think he would have identified himself, as Paul and Peter and others do, as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He's not, the writer does not call himself an apostle of Jesus Christ. The most likely candidate to have written this letter is James, the brother of Jesus.

We know of his existence from several passages of scripture, and he in all respects seems to be the right guy to attach this epistle to. We are told in a number of places, like Mark chapter 6, verse 3, that Jesus had at least four younger brothers, and some sisters. Jesus was the firstborn of Mary, we're told in Luke chapter 2, I believe, or maybe it's Matthew chapter 1, one of those places in the birth narratives, it says that Mary gave birth to her firstborn.

I guess it's the last verse of Matthew 1. So Jesus had other siblings. James apparently was the oldest of those siblings, the next oldest of Mary's children after Jesus. We're told in John chapter 7, very early in that chapter, that the brethren of Jesus did not believe in him, at least not in the early days.

In John chapter 7, it says in verse 3, His brothers therefore said to him, Depart from here and go into Judea, that your disciples also may see the works that you are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.

They're mocking him. Verse 5 says, For even his brothers did not believe in him. Excuse me.

So the brothers of Jesus, including James apparently, were not believers during Jesus' lifetime. We read something of them in Mark chapter 3 that would seem to confirm this. Mark chapter 3 and verse 21, I believe it is.

It says, But what his own people heard about this, that is, Jesus' own people, they went out to lay hold of him, for they said, He's out of his mind. Now when it says his own people, it does not specify his brothers particularly, but if you'll notice a little further down in the same chapter, verse 31, that his brothers and his mother came, and standing outside they sent to him, calling him. This is almost certainly his own people mentioned in verse 21.

So in Mark 3, 21, his own people, who apparently included his mother and brethren, according to verse 31, thought he was crazy. Now some may not like the idea that Mary would have thought that Jesus was out of his mind, because we have a higher view of Mary than that. But then, you know, John the Baptist had his moments where he



wondered if Jesus was doing the right thing too.

And I don't know, but Mary may have had her moments of doubt, or maybe she was just swept along with the general sentiment of the family. After all, Joseph was probably dead, and she was probably now relying on James and the other sons in the way that she had formerly relied on Jesus when he was at home. And they may have persuaded her to go and use her influence to call Jesus aside if they wanted to take him into their custody and put him out of commission.

So we can see Jesus' brothers were not believers during his earthly ministry. However, something changed that. According to 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is sort of cataloging a list of people that Jesus appeared to after his rising from the dead.

In verse 3, he says, 1 Corinthians 15, 3, For I delivered to you first of all that which I received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he was seen by Cephas, which is Peter. Then by the Twelve, after that he was seen by over 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remained to the present, but some had fallen asleep. And after that he was seen by James, then by all the apostles, and last of all he was seen by me, Paul says.

Now, James mentioned here is almost certainly a reference to James the Lord's brother, his oldest younger brother. And it's interesting that Jesus appeared to one of his brothers, when in fact Jesus did not make himself publicly seen after his resurrection, except usually to his disciples. It was not the case, for instance, that Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared to the Sanhedrin and said, look, here I am, I told you, I was God, you know, see what you did.

He didn't appear to Pilate, he didn't appear to Herod, he didn't appear to the Multitudes, he appeared as far as we know only to believers. With the exception of his brother James. And I think it likely that it was on his heart, you know, to convert those that he'd grown up with in his home, even though they'd been unbelievers.

It's hard to grow up in a family with people without feeling close to them. I believe it was a special privilege that God gave to Jesus to appear to his brother, so that the rest of the brothers might, through James' influence no doubt, come to be believers also. You find in the book of Acts, that when the disciples were up in the upper room, waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit, it says in verse 14, Acts 115.

In Acts 114, speaking of the 120 in that room, it says, So between the time of his death and the time of the upper room, his brothers had become believers. No doubt because Jesus appeared to James, his oldest brother and probably his most influential brother, who then no doubt witnessed to the others. And they became believers too.

So in the upper room we find Jesus' brothers present. Not only that though, later on James, the Lord's brother, seems to become the leading spokesman in the church of Jerusalem. And we see this first in Acts chapter 15.

In Acts chapter 15, at the Jerusalem council, the debate is raging over whether Gentiles who become Christians need to be circumcised or not. And some pretty heavy guys give their testimonies. Peter speaks.

Paul and Barnabas speak. Some of the weighty guys speak. But it says in verse 13, Acts 15, 13, After they had become silent, James answered, saying, And then he gives the solution to the problem.

And notice James answers. It means that when James spoke, he was given the answer. He was giving the final word on the matter.

Even though Peter and Paul and others had spoken before him, the opinion of James was what really carried the day. Because James, the Lord's brother, had risen to a position of tremendous respect in the early church. In fact, according to non-biblical writings from the church fathers, this James came to be known as James the Just, which means the righteous.

And that he was very zealous for the law. He was a Christian. But he was zealous for the law.

Now, that doesn't necessarily mean he was a legalist. He may have been, but I don't believe he was. You know, when a Christian is zealous for the law, I think they're legalistic.

But I believe that James was zealous for Jewish evangelism. And even Paul said when he was with the Jews, he became like a Jew. When he was with those who were under the law, he put himself under the law.

And I believe that James, because the venue of his ministry was in Jerusalem, among the Jews, that he put himself under the law in the same sense that Paul did when Paul was among the Jews. Now, Paul spent most of his time among the Gentiles, so he didn't live distinctly like a Jew all the time. But we're told by some of the writings of the church fathers that James the Just, the brother of Jesus, actually took a Nazarite vow, which, of course, not all Jews did, but the most devout often did, which means he grew his hair out and his beard out and he never touched wine, he never came near a dead body, that he was such a prayerful man, it is said that his knees were like the knees of a camel.

They were so raw and calloused, I guess, from having knelt so long, and that he was a strict observer of the Jewish law, and that even the non-Christian Jews in Jerusalem respected him to a certain extent. So, there's no reason to doubt these stories, but it shows that he gained a high regard among the Jews, the believers among the Jews, and

even a lot of the more pious non-believers of the Jews respected James the Just, the brother of Jesus. And by the time the Jerusalem Council, we can see that he's the one who actually drafts the letter to the Gentile churches telling them they don't have to be circumcised, but he does ask them to avoid certain things that would offend the Jewish people in their area, because James' concern is with Jewish evangelism.

We see it later in the book of Acts, when Paul comes on his final trip to Jerusalem. In Acts chapter 21, verse 17, it says, And when he had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day, verse 18, Acts 21, 18, On the following day Paul went in with us to James and to all the elders of the presence.

And when he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and they said to him, You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are here who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law. And so they asked Paul to do some things to show that he was not contrary to the law, but it would seem that James was the main leader there.

He met with James when he came to Jerusalem, and all the elders present as well. So we can see that James was a leading guy in the church of Jerusalem. If you turn to the book of Galatians, where Paul's talking about his early contacts with the apostles after his conversion.

In Galatians, Paul, in this particular place, is arguing strongly that he had very limited contacts with the Jerusalem believers and with their leaders, because his point is to show that he didn't receive his information from them, but he got it from Jesus. But he talks about his early trips to Jerusalem after his conversion. Verse 18, Galatians 1, 18, he says, Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.

But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. Now this was very early, when Peter was still the main guy in Jerusalem, before James rose to that position. But Paul met with only two apostles, he says on his first visit to Jerusalem, Peter and James, the Lord's brother.

Now notice what he calls James, the Lord's brother, he calls him an apostle. I met no other apostles except for him. Meaning that he considered James to be an apostle.

Now James, the Lord's brother, had never been one of the twelve, but Paul himself had never been one of the twelve either. There were a few guys like Paul and Barnabas, who had never been among the twelve, but were nonetheless, they were apostles, they were recognized as sent by Jesus. Probably because Jesus had appeared to them after his resurrection.

And James had received such an appearance from Christ, and apparently an apostolic commission from his brother Jesus. And therefore Paul regarded James, the Lord's brother, to be an apostle. Which means that if he wrote the book of James, then it is apostolic, although the author does not call himself an apostle.

No doubt he felt himself to, if he were a humble man, then he was unworthy to call himself an apostle. Paul himself said of himself that he was unworthy to be called an apostle. James must have felt even more so, since he'd grown up in the home of Jesus, and been around during the earthly ministry of Jesus, but had not believed in him all that time.

I mean, he basically had to resist faith in Christ during all those years. He must have felt very humbled when he finally realized that he had been wronged, and no doubt felt himself unworthy to name himself as an apostle. Although others saw him as an apostle, as Paul clearly did.

Also in Galatians chapter 2, verse 9, Paul's talking about his second visit to Jerusalem after his conversion. In Galatians 2, verse 9, he says, And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, received the grace they had been given to me, they gave me in part as the right-hand apostle. Now James, Peter, and John, sounds like the names of the inner circle in the Gospels.

Peter, James, and John. However, this James would not be James the brother of John in this case, because that James was dead by now. And so it would appear that James the brother of Jesus rose to the position that had been held by James the brother of John after that man's death.

And this James that he mentions in Galatians 2, verse 9, is James the brother of Jesus, who's listed with Peter and John as being the ones who were regarded in the church of Jerusalem as pillars. And later still, in verse 11 of Galatians 2, it says, But when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face. And it says in verse 12, For before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles.

But when they came, he withdrew and separated himself. Now, interesting, these men that came from James, of course these were men that came from the Jerusalem church, to Antioch, and Peter was there. Peter had formerly been eating with the Gentiles, but he was so intimidated by these guys who came from James.

Imagine a guy like Peter. Peter, the guy who was the main guy in the Jerusalem church in the earlier years, now he's intimidated by representatives coming from James. James, it is clear, had become quite prominent in the church at this point.

Now, whether James would have been critical of Peter eating with the Gentiles, we don't know. Peter may have known that he would have been. And James may have been a

little bit legalistic at this early point, because in these early days, it was perhaps, it's very possible that there had not yet even been a decision made as to whether the Gentiles were acceptable or not.

It's depending on how one puts the chronology of the early Galatians chapters, it's possible, and probable, in my opinion, that it all happened before the Jerusalem council. So, before that decision was made by Peter and James at the Jerusalem council that the Gentiles were okay, James may have been a little critical if he found Peter eating with the Gentiles, and Paul withstood Peter. So, Peter's got to have come from both ways, James and Paul.

Put him under pressure from both sides. James kind of intimidating him about not eating with the Gentiles, and Paul rebuking him for not doing it. Poor Peter, he's the guy who's supposed to be such a heavyweight, but he must have been sort of timid, no doubt quite humbled by his own failures in denying the Lord and so forth.

Anyway, this is that James in all likelihood. Now, I say in all likelihood without an awful lot of direct evidence. There are strong early traditions that associate this book with that James.

The man does not refer to himself as an apostle, which he probably would if he was one of the twelve. Though we're not sure that he would have, and so that doesn't prove anything necessarily. But he does write with such an authority that he expects his readers to accept his authority as if it were apostolic.

He addresses it to the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad, we take those to be Jewish believers. We know that no man like James, the brother of the Lord, had the kind of clout as he did with the Jewish believers. That was his domain.

In Galatians chapter 2, Paul says that Peter, James, and John gave him and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that they should go to the uncircumcised as they, that is Peter, James, and John, went to the circumcised. That is James and the other apostles, and probably particularly James as he rose to the most prominent position in the Jerusalem church, would have been recognized as the principal apostle to the Jews, just as Paul and Barnabas were to the Gentiles. And so he would be just the guy to write a letter like this to the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad, meaning the Christian Jews scattered around.

Furthermore, we see a real concern about law here. However, the law he's emphasizing is what he calls the royal law, which would mean the law of the kingdom. Royal has to do with the king.

He speaks of the royal law, and he gives it in chapter 2, verse 8 of James. If you really fulfill the royal law, according to the scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself,

you do well. So, James refers to you shall love your neighbor as yourself as the royal law, which is of course the law of the kingdom.

Jesus the king gave this law, but it's also according to scripture. That's according to Old Testament scripture. Jesus took it out of the Old Testament and gave it a new emphasis and a new centrality.

And so it's from the scripture, as James puts it, the Old Testament scripture. But it's also the law of the king, the royal law. But elsewhere he calls it the law of liberty.

In chapter 1, verse 25, he says, but he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it. And a little later on also, he uses the same expression, without the word perfect. In chapter 4, verse 11, he says, do not speak evil one of another brethren.

He who speaks evil of a brethren and judges brethren speaks evil of the law and judges the law. I'm sorry, this is not the verse I was thinking of. It's, um, let me see where is the verse I'm looking for.

Oh, chapter 2, verse 12, I believe it is. Yeah. It says, so speak and so do, as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

So in chapter 1, verse 25, in chapter 2, verse 12, he speaks of the law of liberty, the law of freedom, not the law of bondage. And he calls it the royal law, in chapter 2, verse 8, which is love your neighbor as yourself. This is the perfect law of liberty.

Now, that gives us the impression that the writer here is expounding on the perfect law of the kingdom, the law of liberty, the law to love your neighbor as yourself. In my understanding, that's exactly what the Sermon on the Mount is expounding on, too. The Sermon on the Mount, as I take it, and I have for long seen it, is simply an exposition on what it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

And so is James an exposition on that. And, of course, he uses the Sermon on the Mount as his basis. I think we could say James is a lengthy exposition on what love behaves like.

Now, some would summarize it as an exposition on faith that works through love, which is, of course, an expression taken from Paul, not from James. In Galatians 5, 6, he says what matters to God is faith that works through love. Certainly that's what James is about, too.

It's about faith. It's about faith that works. And it's about faith that works through love, and that the law of the kingdom is love.

And if you have faith, love will issue, and behavior of a loving sort will be the product of that kind of saving faith. That is certainly the main thought. As we go through, as I will

seek to identify the various places where he draws from the Sermon on the Mount, but he doesn't only draw from that.

As I pointed out, about 20 times, at least 20 times, he draws from the Sermon on the Mount for his thoughts. But he also draws from other parts of the New Testament, and usually from the teachings of Jesus. He draws a bit from the Olivet Discourse.

He draws a bit from the parables of Jesus. He draws... He seemed to be very impressed with the teachings of Jesus. And rightly he should be.

Jesus told the disciples to teach all nations to observe all things that he had commanded. And so James is a very good epistle for fulfilling that. Now, in another sense, the epistle of James is kind of like the Book of Proverbs.

I say kind of like it. It's more like an epistle than Proverbs is, of course. Proverbs is just collective sayings of wisdom.

James is more than that. James has a sustained argument which hits on some of the same points repeatedly, just like Proverbs does. But whereas Proverbs usually has, very frequently, just one verse on a subject, and then the next verse and the one before it are probably on an entirely different subject.

So that the wisdom of Proverbs is encapsulated in individual verse-long statements, just very short wisdom sayings. The wisdom in James is treated in somewhat longer paragraphs. But covering many of the same points, there are about six subjects in James which recur all the time in the book.

And I have, in fact, in my own breaking down of the book, I've broken it down into sections so that every verse in the book falls into one of these six categories. Now, there may be a certain artificiality of that breaking, but I don't believe so. You can judge it as you go through.

But I'll tell you what the six subjects are that recur. And you'll see that from your familiarity with Proverbs that they're the same subjects that Proverbs is concerned with to a large extent. The first is patience in trials.

The subject of patience in trials. This one doesn't come up in Proverbs as much as it comes up in James. But that is something that James comes to about three different times in this epistle.

Second is wisdom. We know that that's a major theme in Proverbs. Wisdom.

There's about, oh, a couple or three major places in James where he talks about that subject. The third would be faith and the nature of true faith. Trusting God.

There's about four times in the epistle, or five, that he speaks on this subject. The fourth

subject would be riches and poverty. Riches and poverty.

About four different times in the epistle he comes to that subject. That is also found in Proverbs. Considerable attention in Proverbs is given to that subject.

The fifth subject would be the use of the tongue. There's at least five times or more in James where he draws attention to the proper use of the tongue or the improper use of the tongue. No one can have read Proverbs without realizing that Proverbs also concerns itself heavily with that subject.

So the sixth subject in James, that would be obedience to God. And there's about four times or so, some of them lengthy passages in James, that talk about the need to be obedient to God. Faith and obedience are two of the subjects here and they are two sides of one coin.

There are certain portions of other parts of the New Testament that emphasize simply faith. James emphasizes obedience but also faith. He considers both of them related to each other.

Now of those six major subjects, about four of them are as prominent in Proverbs as they are in James. And some could, in fact, I think, I came to this on my own many years ago but I was surprised by others who made this same observation later that James would be sort of like a New Testament book of Proverbs. But not exactly.

Because Proverbs is more general information and general wisdom for living in common sense. Whereas James is a special application of the Sermon on the Mount and the wisdom found there as applied to a particular generation, probably Jews who were facing a very soon crisis. And that crisis would probably have been the fall of Jerusalem.

That would be, we don't know how soon. There are some who would place the writing of this book as early as 50 A.D. If it was written that early, that was about 20 years before the crisis. About 20 years before Jerusalem fell.

And it would also make it one of the earliest books in the New Testament, possibly Galatians. Would have been written about that time. But there are, as with Galatians, there's two theories about James and the dates.

There are some who make it an early date, some a later date. Those who give the early date of Galatians would put it around 50 A.D. The same is true of those who give the early date of James. Those who have the later date of Galatians put it considerably later than other epistles of Paul.

But those who have a late date for James can sometimes put it in the 2nd century and make it a forgery, really. I mean, the liberal schools do not believe that this was written in the 1st century. There's no solid reason to deny that it was.



It's just the tendency of liberals to always try to late date things. It tends to defuse them a little bit of their power and their authority if they were written by a 2nd century Christian falsely putting the name James on it, which is what they believe was done. But that is simply to critique the author as a dishonest man.

And there's no reason that the early church would have been unaware of this forgery. I mean, if we're aware of it, why wouldn't the earliest churches have known of it? And obviously they didn't. They believed that this was written in the 1st century by James, the Lord's brother.

And I think that's probably the best theory of authorship in dating. As far as date goes, James, the Lord's brother, was killed according to Josephus. It's funny that Josephus would even mention James. In fact, he almost has more to say about James than he has to say about Jesus.

Because one of the, probably the only indisputable passage in Josephus that mentions Jesus is a passage that's not really about Jesus but about James. Because Josephus tells us that I think it was when Pontius Pilate left office, there was a power vacuum. The Romans had not yet sent in a new procurator.

And the Sanhedrin was temporarily kind of at liberty to do what they wanted. And they were real angry at James, the Lord's brother. And so, Josephus says they took this opportunity to stone James, the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ.

That's how Josephus puts it. And although there is another passage in Josephus that mentions Jesus, that second passage is somewhat questioned as far as its authenticity. But no one questions the authenticity of the passage where he says they stoned James, the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ.

So, I mean, the only indisputable reference to Jesus in Josephus is simply as mentioned as the brother of this guy, James. So, James was significant enough that even Josephus, a non-Christian, was aware of him and knew of his death. And this was prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

So, if James, the brother of the Lord, wrote it, he wrote it before the destruction of Jerusalem because he died before the destruction of Jerusalem. But how near to that time, we cannot say. But it may have been as early as 50 AD or it could have been somewhat, maybe closer.

I don't know. I don't know exactly when James died. I guess those who study Josephus carefully could determine that I don't have that information.

But I do think that since he's writing to Jewish people before that crisis, there would be some grounds for seeing that his foreseeing that crisis colored somewhat the strength of his exhortations on some of these points. Especially, I think, in Chapter 5. Okay? I

mentioned the heavy reliance of James on the Sermon on the Mount. Let me point out to you one verse in James which I think is actually a summary of the Sermon on the Mount.

And that is in James 3, in verse 17. James 3, 17 says, But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now, I believe that that verse is a summary of the Sermon on the Mount.

For one thing, the Sermon on the Mount closes with a statement about what wisdom is. Remember, after Jesus has given his lengthy teaching on how to live and so forth, he says, He that hears these words of mine and does them he is like a wise man who builds his house on the rock. You know the story.

Then he says, And he that hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who builds his house on sand. That's how Jesus closes or summarizes this whole sermon. That if you do what I've just said, you'll be like a wise man.

If you don't do what I've just said, you'll be a foolish man. That's how he summarizes the Sermon on the Mount. Well, this is a statement about what wisdom is.

What does it mean to be a wise man? Well, the wisdom from above is first pure. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. In Matthew 5, 8. And he expanded on that when he talked about, you've heard that it was said, you should not commit adultery, but I say to you that he that looks at a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

He's making his appeal for purity of heart. Well, the wisdom from above is pure, James says. It's peaceable.

Jesus said, Blessed are the peacemakers. In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 9. For they shall be called the sons of God. He also talked about turning the other cheek and loving your enemies and so forth, which is the way to make peace with your enemies.

Loving your enemies and doing good to those who harm you and so forth. That certainly is peaceable behavior. The wisdom from above is next, gentle.

Jesus' Beatitude, Matthew 5, 5. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Some translations translate meek as gentle. Blessed are the gentle.

Meekness and gentleness are parallel concepts. Some would say identical concepts. Gentleness is certainly taught in the Sermon on the Mount and advocated.

Willing to yield is the next thing that the wisdom from above is said to be, James 3, 17. It's willing to yield. That certainly is what Jesus teaches in Matthew 5, verses 39 through 42, about turning the other cheek, about giving to everyone who asks.

If someone wants to sue you, give them what they want and more. That sounds pretty willing to yield. That's wisdom, James said.

Full of mercy. Well, in Matthew 5, 7, Jesus said, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. James also sort of quotes that verse in chapter 2. That's a quote that says something similar.

In chapter 2, verse 13, For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. The person who is not merciful will not receive mercy. Jesus said, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

He also said, in Matthew chapter 6, that if you don't forgive men their trespasses, your father won't forgive you yours, and so forth. In other words, the need to be merciful is emphasized. Full of good fruits, James 3, 17 says.

The wisdom from those full of good fruits. In Matthew 7, 16 through 20, Jesus talked about beware of false prophets. He said, you'll know them by their fruits.

No good tree can produce evil fruit, and no evil tree can produce good fruit. Indicating that true Christians will be full of good fruits. And evil false prophets will be full of evil fruits.

Well, the wisdom from above is full of good fruit. Without partiality, James says. Without partiality.

In Matthew 5, 46 through 48, Jesus said, if you love only those who love you, what thanks do you have? Even the tax collectors do the same. And if you salute only those who salute you, or greet those who greet you, what thank do you have for that? What credit is that to you? Even the tax collectors do that. But he said, you should be like your father, who doesn't show partiality.

He causes his rain to fall on the just and the unjust, and causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good. Therefore, love your enemies, and do good to those who are pristine. In other words, you don't show the kind of partiality that mankind usually does.

Favoring their friends. But you show impartial love and mercy. And you show kindness to people whom you would not be inclined to show such mercy to.

And the last thing about the wisdom from above that James mentions is it's without hypocrisy. Well, there's a major section of the Sermon on the Mount about that in Matthew 6, verses 1 through 18, where three times it says, do not be like the hypocrites. When you do alms, do not be like the hypocrites.

When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites. When you fast, don't be like the hypocrites. And in Matthew 7, when he talks about judging and talks about the beam in the eye, he

says, you hypocrite, get the beam out of your own eye first.

So, every one of these things in this list that James says, this is what the wisdom from above is like. It's like what Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount. And Jesus closed the Sermon on the Mount and said, if you do these things, you're like a wise man.

So, it's as if James takes the basic thoughts of the Sermon on the Mount and wraps them up in one verse and says, this is what wisdom is. So, you can see how much the Sermon on the Mount affected James in his concept of Christian ethics and duty. Now, there are some who would call James James and the next six epistles in our Bible, which would be 1st and 2nd Peter, 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, and Jude.

They would call them Jewish epistles. James, as we point out, is addressed to 12 tribes that are scattered abroad, and no doubt a Jewish audience. There is no evidence, or little evidence, I should say, that any of the other epistles, 1st, 2nd Peter, 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, or Jude, are addressed to Jews.

Although, as I mentioned, Peter does speak of his readers as being the sojourners or the pilgrims of the Diaspora, but that seems to be figurative there. There are evidences within his epistles that his readers are, in fact, Gentiles. But, some would say that all these epistles are Jewish epistles.

In fact, I think, and I don't want to malign them, but I think this is the dispensational position. I think dispensationalists call these Jewish epistles. And perhaps they do so because of the strong stress on obedience, especially in James, and some of these others.

And, you know, it is the position of dispensationalism that the Sermon on the Mount is not for Christians today, it was for Jews. It was for the Jews that Jesus first spoke to, they rejected his kingdom, and so he took it away, they'll bring it back when he returns, and then the Sermon on the Mount will be relevant in the millennium. That's what Spofield taught, that's what the dispensationalists could tell those who are knowledgeable of their doctrine.

Some of them are not as knowledgeable of their doctrine and don't know that that's what their teachers teach. But, James, therefore, you know, some would say, well, it doesn't apply to us, it applies to the Jews. But it's hard to know why James would write an epistle that applied just to the Jews, well after the ascension of Christ, well after the establishment of the Church.

James was not a representative Jew, he was a representative Christian leader. He was not a leader of the Jews, he was a leader of the Christians, the Christian Jews. And to suggest that God has different ethics and different gospel for Jewish Christians than for Gentile Christians would be a strange doctrine in view of Paul's teaching that there's no

Jew or Gentile in Christ, and that the wall of perdition is broken down, and that it's all one new man now.

So whatever James did to the Jewish believers would be also duly incumbent on Gentile believers, and on Christians in general. It may be, of course, that his actual audience were Jewish believers, just like some of Paul's audience were Galatian believers, or Corinthian believers, or Roman believers, but that doesn't mean that it's, that the Jewish believers have a different set of ethics, or a different, because they're Jewish, than Gentile believers have. More commonly, these seven epistles, beginning with James and ending with Jude.

James, 1st, 2nd Peter, 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, and Jude. There's seven of them. They're more commonly called the general or Catholic epistles.

Catholic is a word that doesn't, we usually think of Roman Catholic when we hear that word, but the word Catholic actually means universal. And some would call these the Catholic or universal, or the general epistles, because unlike Paul's epistles, they were not written to some particular church, but they were circular epistles that seemed to have gone around to various locations. For instance, James is addressed to, apparently, Christian Jews scattered everywhere, you know, wherever they may be.

Peter addresses it to five different regions, to all the Christians in these regions, where he sends his epistle. John doesn't tell us where he's writing his epistle to, nor does Jude. But that is, we don't have any particular location that this is sent to, except probably everywhere.

Everywhere that there's Jewish believers. And now, of course, we could say any believers. The reason that this would be addressed particularly to Jewish believers, that would be, first of all, because James had a particular ministry to the circumcised.

And secondly, because there was a crisis that was going to come on the earth, that was going to affect the Jewish believers probably more than any other believers. And that was the downfall of their system. Because you know that the Jewish believers, early on, still held the law and the ceremonies of the temple in high regard.

We know that from the Book of Acts. They still took Nazarite vows, they still offered sacrifices, it would appear. They kept the festivals, the results for the law.

They practiced circumcision of their children. And with the fall of the temple in Jerusalem, that would change their whole way of life and their whole way of being Christian. And so there is some element of urgency on the Jewish believers and the way it will affect their lives more than the Gentile believers that may have been the reason for James addressing them as he did.

But we'll go ahead and get into the book itself. The Book of James I've covered two

different ways at different times. Sometimes I just go through it chapter by chapter, verse by verse, like we would any other epistle.

Other times I've taken it topically. As I said, there's about six topics and everything in James can fall into one of those six. And sometimes I've just taken the topics and taken it that way.

Partly because there is not a logically sustained argument in James like there is in, say, Romans or Hebrews or Galatians or something like that. Or Ephesians. But it rather comes back to subjects.

In fact, some scholars believe that this was a series of different sermons that were put together because if it was one sermon or one letter originally, someone felt that he would have put all the material on one subject in one place but he didn't do that. I'm going to take it verse by verse this time rather than topically, but I will... I'll leave it to you. I'll tell you when we're on a passage that I take to be about one of these topics.

It should be obvious to you at the time when we're doing it. You may want to keep a topical arrangement in your notes where we come to a passage about patience and trials or about wisdom or about faith or about riches and poverty or about speaking, use of the tongue, or about obedience. You may want to itemize the passages for your own later topical study.

But we'll just, in this case, we'll go through it verse by verse. James, the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad, reading, My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Now, this information about counting it joy when you fall into trials because trials actually work for your good. They produce, he says, the trial of your faith produces patience in verse 3. Actually, patience would be better translated as perseverance or endurance. It's not patience as we usually think of it so much as endurance or perseverance that is worked into us.

It makes you tougher. To go through little trials prepares you for bigger trials. It's like when you're learning to play the guitar.

Your fingers will hurt initially after playing for a few minutes because the tips of your fingers are not accustomed to pressing down against the steel strings. But after a while, your fingers become stronger. They become maybe calloused and there's no pain anymore.

You can play for a lot longer time because you've conditioned yourself. You've gotten... You've built up perseverance. I remember when I first decided many years ago that I

probably should get on some kind of exercise program because I read that pastors of churches, ministers were the most out of shape physically unfit category of professionals in a magazine article.

I decided that maybe I... I mean, I've never been physically fit and I've never been overweight either but being too skinny is not, in my opinion, desirable either. So I thought, well, maybe I'd better, you know, just for my cardiovascular health and so forth, I'd probably get on some kind of an aerobics routine or something. So I had a friend who owned a gym in Abandon and I joined his club and I started going about three times a week and eventually, actually, I put on a good amount of weight, which is what I was trying to do.

I've always been very underweight. I put on about 25 pounds, about... At the time, that was very good. It was very good for me.

But I remember the first time I sat on the exercise bicycle. I had not been a bicycle rider. I always drive my car places and I've just never done anything to keep fit.

I remember saying, well, you know, I know a 20-minute workout is supposed to be an aerobic workout. So I figured I'd go for 20 minutes. And literally, after two minutes, I thought, I'm not going to be able to go another minute.

I really had... It wasn't so much that my muscles ached. It was too early for that to happen. It was just my... I was out of breath.

I just was totally out of breath and I had no endurance at all. I thought, I can never have an aerobic workout. But I decided to persevere and I made it through maybe 12 minutes or something like that, that day.

But I decided I was going to keep it up. And of course, anyone knows how that story goes. Eventually, because I did keep it up, I got to a place where I could go full length and longer without any difficulty at all.

I could increase the resistance and so forth. And it was nothing at all. I mean, I could go 20 minutes easier than I'd gone two minutes at first.

And that's simply because when you press yourself beyond the comfort zone, you develop endurance, perseverance. And spiritually speaking, God does that in our lives as well. He wants to develop perseverance in us.

There can be worse trials ahead. In Jeremiah chapter 12, Jeremiah was complaining about the seeming injustice of things, how that he was a good old guy, loyal to God, and he was suffering, whereas the wicked seemed to be prospering. He said in verse 4 of Jeremiah 12, How long will the land mourn and the herbs of the field wither, and the beasts and birds are consumed for the wickedness of those who dwell there? Because

they said, He will not see our final land.

But God answers Jeremiah in Jeremiah 12, 5, and says, If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace in which you trusted they wearied you, how then will you do in the flooding of the Jordan? In other words, you think things are bad now. What you're doing is incomparable to running in a foot race against footmen. What about in the future when you're actually going to be in circumstances that are analogous to running against horses? You're still on foot, and they're on horseback.

That's going to be the real test of your endurance and your strength. And if you're getting tired now, this is just the easy stuff. You're just in training now.

How are you going to work it out when things get bad? And I think that that's a good challenge to Christians, especially in our own society. Because it's amazing to me how many Christians I find who feel sorry for themselves and so forth, and they just think life is so hard, and being a Christian is so taxing, and we don't even have any problems here. That is incredible.

When you think that in many parts of the world, and possibly in this part of the world, there could be actual martyrs for the Christian faith. And almost certainly there will be greater discomfort and fewer freedoms, and greater humiliation and so forth for being a Christian. There's certainly worse things to look forward to.

And even so, we may never have it as bad as Christians had it in the second and third centuries under the Roman emperors, or during the Dark Ages under the popes, when 50 million Christians were tortured and killed throughout Europe. I mean, there was no safe place to hide. I mean, this has been in the lot of Christians for a long time.

We just haven't noticed. When we find people groaning and feeling sorry for themselves, well, there's really nothing wrong. Nothing's going wrong.

I mean, it's almost like we have to make up imaginary trials to make ourselves feel burdened, because we really aren't hurting at all. And yet, if we're groaning and whining under this kind of conditions, what should we do when we have to run against the horses? Now, one thing, God is faithful. He knows when we're going to have to run against the horses, and while we're running against footmen, he'll put the weights on us that are necessary to work perseverance.

Because what we're going to need in harder times is perseverance and endurance. And so the trials that we're given at this time are there in order to train us, to prepare us, to condition our thinking more, and to cause us to be people who will tend to persevere. I don't know why the New King James, in verse 3 here, translates the word as patience.

I know the King James uses that word, but in Romans chapter 5, we have the same word,



and it's better translated, in this case by the New King James translators, than it is in James 1.3. It says in Romans 5.3, not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance. The same word. Tribulation produces perseverance.

Therefore we glory in tribulations. James said, Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Now, your response to trials is not supposed to be despair or self-pity, but count it all joy.

It doesn't mean try to find some little positive glimmer of hope in the situation and try to grit your teeth and survive on that little tiny bit of encouragement. But count it all joy, every bit of it. If you do not believe in the sovereignty of God the way you should, it will be hard for you to count it all joy when things go differently than you hope, or differently than you think would be best.

For your interest, or even for the interest of the kingdom of God, sometimes we think, well, why is God letting this happen? Why is God letting that wicked person prosper and letting this godly person suffer or whatever? Why are there preachers who preach in false gospels all over television, but the people who preach the true gospels, no one listens or hears them or knows they exist? I mean, we wonder about these things. And we wonder why it is that God gives all the money to the wicked, but the righteous who would do something good with it don't have any. I mean, things that go differently than we think they should are likely to get us to be despondent or to be bummed out about things.

And the Bible indicates that we can trust God to be in control of everything. And he works all things together for the good of those who love him and who are called according to his purpose, that he works all things according to the counsel of his own will, the Bible says in Ephesians 1-11. And that we can just count it as joy because it's what God wants.

Because God wants us to learn endurance. He gives us trials. It is a trying of our faith, you note.

This is an important thing. It's our faith that is being tested in trials. Because it's easy to believe that God is a good God and a powerful God when every prayer we ask is answered immediately.

When every desire we have, he gives it to us before we ask him or whatever. I mean, every time we're sick, God miraculously heals. When all things go well, exactly as we want, it's not hard to believe in a God who's good and powerful and who can do all things.

The test of your faith is when you're called upon to believe that God is good and all

powerful, but you're not getting from him what you think a good God should give you. You think he ought to do this for you. You wish he would do that for you.

You think he ought to be able to do so much. He could do it on his head. It doesn't even cost him anything.

Out of petty cash, he could pay off all your bills and not even touch his principal. It seems like God is able to do anything. How come he doesn't do the things that it seems to me he should do that would make my life a lot easier? Well, when he doesn't, I am supposed to believe in the goodness and the sovereignty of God as much at those times as other times.

It's just more of a trial of my faith. It's more of a test of my faith. When the things are not going the way it seems like a good God ought to be doing them.

You know, one of the great philosophical questions that caused many people actually to reject God is the idea of, well, why is there suffering in the world if in fact there is a God who is all powerful and all good? If God is all good, he wouldn't want there to be suffering, they say. And if he's all powerful, he wouldn't allow there to be suffering if he doesn't want to be there. Therefore, if there is suffering, God must either not be all good or not all powerful, so they think.

And so the goodness and or the power of God are questioned by them based on the evidence of suffering in the world. Now, the flaw in this thinking, of course, is to assume that a good God would never want suffering to take place. That's like saying a good parent would never want his children to feel pain.

Well, there's a sense in which a good parent doesn't ever want their children to feel pain, but they know that it can be good for the child. And in the book of Psalms, in Psalm 119, the psalmist said, It is good for me that I've been afflicted. And I know that your judgments are right, O God, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

You see, if someone assumes a priori that suffering is evil, then the presence of suffering is an argument either against God's goodness or against his all power. But who says that suffering is always evil? Surgery can be painful, but it can be very good for a person to have surgery. They may die without it and live with it.

In a fallen world, sometimes benefits do not just drop out of the sky or pop out of the ground. The fallen world is against us, and therefore, cures for maladies in the human race may be as painful as radical surgery can be. And by the way, of course, we have anesthesia now, but there were times before anesthesia, people had surgeries without any pain killer.

And you can bet that was a pretty painful experience, but they endured it for their own good. In a perfect world where there's no sickness, you'd never need surgery. But we live

in a fallen world.

And same is true spiritually. In an unfallen world, we would be perfect people without any pain, without any need for suffering. But God uses trials and tests and deprivals and denials of us, of our desires and so forth, in order to develop us spiritually.

And the particular thing he's working on is our faith, because faith is everything to him. And he wants us to trust him. And the way to see if our faith is flabby or fit is to say, okay, now let me do something that they don't understand why I'm doing that.

See if they trust me as much when I'm not doing what they think I ought to do. See if they still trust me as much. And that's where many people fall away.

Many people fall away because they thought Christianity was going to be a bed of roses. They thought Christianity was going to be joy, peace and good vibes all their life long without any trials or tunnels. And as soon as they come, the tunnels come, they're ready to run the other direction.

Let them go. That's what the trials are there for, to test their faith to see if it's real or not. To see if it's the kind of thing that's going to hold in the real world, or whether it's the kind of thing that can only live in the rarefied climate of an artificial environment created by church.

You know? I mean, will your faith stand up in the trials of real life? Or do you need to run every day to a church meeting to get kind of strokes and pumped up and so forth, because the real world's too hard for you? Well, what's your faith like? What kind of faith is it? Is it a real world faith? Or is it a faith that works in a religious environment? Well, that's what's tested to see. Anybody can believe and stay a Christian if they're bolstered 24 hours a day by their fellow brethren. But it's when you don't have that support, when things start to go wrong, where you need to lean on God alone, where you need to trust Him against all seemings, that you find out if your faith is the real kind or the false kind.

And James, of course, is the epistle more than any other, and tells us there is a false kind of faith. There is a kind of faith that's without works, that the devil himself even has, but it doesn't save anyone. It's not the right kind of faith.

And so God puts our faith to the test to see whether our faith is the right kind or the wrong kind. And if it passes the test, not only does it show us that we have the right kind of faith, but it does something positive for it. It strengthens our faith.

It produces endurance. And that's good. And therefore we should count it all joy when we fall into diverse tests of our faith.

Now, why is it all joy? Because first of all, if it's a false faith we have, that'll be shown through the test. And by the way, while it may not be what you'd hope to find out,

namely that your faith was not a genuine one, yet it's good for you to find out, rather than for you to live in a false security thinking you have a saving faith when you don't. Better it is for you to have it tested so you can see whether you've got a saving, genuine faith or not.

And of course the second reason is that if it is a genuine faith that you have, it'll be strengthened and your endurance will be increased by the testing. And he says, so you can count it all joy when you fall into diverse trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience, but let patience, verse 4, have its perfect worth, its complete worth, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing, that you may be perfect. And count it all joy, are both references back to the Sermon on the Mount.

In Matthew 5, verses 10 through 12, Jesus said, Blessed are you when men shall persecute you and revile you and cast out your name as evil and say all men are evil against you, for my name's sake. In that day he said, Rejoice, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they treated the prophets and the righteous men before you. He said, When that happens to you, rejoice.

In Luke's parallel, in Luke 6, he says, Leap for joy and spin around for joy when this happens to you. When these trials and tribulations come upon you, leap for joy about that, he said. And so James comes from the same place.

When you have these various tests, jump for joy, count it all joy. Matthew 5, verses 10 through 12, is where Jesus indicated the same thought. And then when it says that you may be perfect, in James 1, 4, it reminds us of Matthew 5, 48, where Jesus said, Therefore be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5, 48. James says, If you want to be perfect, well, you're going to have to go through some trials, because endurance has to have its perfect word to make you perfect. And in tired, lacking in nothings.

When you become a Christian, you're complete in Him, in the sense that as far as God's concerned, you don't lack anything. You need to be His child, to be accepted and to be saved. But that's far from saying that you're complete in the sense of your character.

Because, obviously, many changes have to take place in the process of sanctification of your life. Habits have to be dropped. Deliverance from certain things, no doubt, are necessary.

New attitudes replacing old ones, and so forth. A lot of things have to change in the renewing of your mind. You may lack patience.

You may lack compassion. You may lack a sense of justice and fairness when you become a Christian. But, you're not supposed to lack anything when God's done with you.

And the trials that are sent to you are there to produce the patience, and the patience produces the other things. The other things, so that you will lack nothing. As you endure the dealings of God in your life, the chasing of the Lord, and so forth, you will find that He does it for our holiness.

He does it for our good, that we might be partakers of His holiness, it says in Hebrews 12. So, God doesn't want us to lack anything. I don't want us to be complete, lacking nothing.

Now, one thing that a person might lack is wisdom. He says in verse 5, If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally, which means generously, and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

For do not let that man suppose that he'll receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.

In the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 7 of Matthew, and verse 7, Jesus said, Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened unto you.

Obviously, the thing to do is to ask God when you have need of something. James later says, in chapter 4, You have not, because you ask not. Here he says, If you lack wisdom, the thing to do is ask.

Jesus said, Ask, and it will be given to you. So James says the same thing. Ask of God who gives to all who live.

And it will be given to him. Ask, and it will be given to him, he says. A paraphrase of Jesus' own statement in Matthew 7, 7. Now, wisdom.

What is wisdom here? Well, in various contexts, it could mean different things. It could mean, of course, it could mean the ability to make wise choices, which is probably what it means here. It could mean a higher IQ, just being generally smarter, but I don't know if that's implied here.

I don't think that he's saying that if you are, say, a person who is spiritually slow or dull, that you just have to ask God and your IQ will increase measurably. But I think what it means is if you need to know the wise thing to do in any situation, God wants you to know the wise thing to do in every situation, and you can ask him, and he'll give it to you. Of course, there's some guidance about wisdom in chapter 3, which we saw earlier.

There is a wisdom that is from above and a wisdom that is from below. And sometimes the wisdom from below is mistakenly thought to be wisdom, but it is in fact earthly, sensual, and demonic, according to chapter 3, verse 15. But he did tell us what the wisdom from above is like in James 3, 17, which is very much like the Sermon on the

Mount, to do with the things that Jesus said.

This is wisdom. Do you lack wisdom? Well, let him ask of God. God will give you wisdom.

He's already given wisdom, of course, through Jesus' teachings on the subject, but he can give you the application in your spirit and in your own circumstance, which sometimes is needed, I mean, in the sense that you can't always just take a verse from the Sermon on the Mount and know exactly what to do in this situation with that verse, but you can ask God, because God won't reproach you for asking. He wants you to have that. He gives generously.

But a person who asks God for wisdom must ask believing God, ask in faith, not wavering. In other words, you have to really believe that God is there, that he's going to answer your request, that he's going to keep his promise, that if you ask him, he's really going to respond to you, and then you can move forward. And then on the wisdom that you receive, this is, in my opinion, a good passage about personal guidance, because there's many times that people want to get a word from God.

They'd like maybe a personal prophecy or a dream or a vision or something to tell them which way to go, but what James says is just ask for wisdom and believe, and don't waver on it. Just believe that God answers you, in which case it means, I just say, God, I need to know what to do, and even if I don't get a dream or a vision or a prophecy about it, I'll just act upon the wisdom that I will trust that you've given me. I'm not going to waver on this.

I will believe that you've given me the wisdom according to your promise. I will act on what seems like wisdom to me after I've asked for wisdom. And no doubt, that's an important phrase, no doubt, not wavering, asking in faith, I believe that the wisdom I will then have will be the wisdom you've given me.

He's promised it, and I can ask for it. I'm supposed to waver in my faith about it when I ask for that. Otherwise, I'm not going to be sure which direction to go.

I'll be like a wave tossed this way and that way by the wind. Or Paul used another, used the wind in Ephesians 4, 15, I think it was, or 14, as the example of one who is tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. A person can be tossed to and fro by the wind of doctrine.

He can also be tossed to and fro simply by uncertainty as far as what to do in a situation. And I think that, he says, a person like that is unstable. He's double-minded.

He's not sure what God wants him to do. He's not sure whether God is guiding him or not. He's not sure whether God's answering his promises or not, fulfilling his promises when you ask for wisdom, whether God's giving you that.

Now, that person, of course, can be unstable in all his ways. He doesn't know what's wise, what's foolish. He doesn't know which way to go.

Sometimes he's going to, sometimes he's going fro. He's tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. He's tossed to and fro like the waves of the sea have been tossed.

And he makes this statement in verse 7. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. Now, probably what that means is if he can't trust God to give him wisdom, then he's got no grounds to expect it. In fact, a person who can't trust God to fulfill his promises can't receive anything from the Lord.

That's an important thing. If you don't believe that when you come to God in Jesus' name and say, forgive my sins, that he does it, then he doesn't. You receive that by faith.

If you don't appropriate it by your own personal faith in him, then it doesn't happen. The man who wavers his faith on this matter, let him not think that he'll receive anything from the Lord. Now, you might say, well, gee, I'm in big trouble because it seems like I have doubts and my faith wavers from time to time and so forth.

You need to be able to distinguish between a doubt that arises from within yourself, on the one hand, and a doubt that is simply a temptation to doubt, a suggestion from the enemy. God is not true. There's a very big difference.

It's like lust or like almost any other sin, that it can be something arising from your own heart. It can be something that is not arising from your own heart, but the devil is trying to stick it in your head and you're not receiving it. When I was baptized in the Spirit, I didn't feel what I thought I was supposed to feel.

I didn't do what I thought I was supposed to do. And I was left with the decision, shall I believe or shall I not believe that I was baptized in the Spirit? And I remember a scripture from Jesus where he said, if you earthly fathers, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to those who ask him? I thought, well, that's a promise from God. I asked him.

I believe, therefore, that he kept his promise. I wasn't sure whether I'd spoken in tongues or not. I wasn't sure whether I felt anything special or not.

There were some feelings that were immediately evident afterwards, but at the time I was making my decision, did I receive the baptism or did not? I didn't make it on bare faith, that decision. No, God said so. I will not doubt it.

Now, doubts came to my mind, but I simply wouldn't entertain them. In my heart, I was determined to believe God. And that is a decision I am entitled to make and you are entitled to make.

If you have doubts from time to time, ask yourself, am I doubting because I prefer to doubt, because I'm allowing myself to doubt? Or am I doubting just because I'm being bombarded by an attack, an enemy trying to make me doubt? If the latter is true, then what you need to do is simply say, I will believe God. Let God be true and every man a liar. I will not allow these doubts.

If God has promised it, I believe it. If God has said that he accepts me in Christ, then I believe that. Period.

I will not waver on it. There are many times when the devil comes and puts thought in my head that it's not true, I simply will not receive that. You see, faith is a decision, and it's a warfare.

It's something that gets tested. God allows it to get tested. There's a fight of faith.

And you're supposed to fight the good fight of faith. And that fight is against doubts. The shield of faith is given to ward off the fiery darts of the enemy.

Well, the fiery darts must be doubts. That's what faith wards off, is doubt. The devil's shooting these fiery darts of doubt at you.

Well, you just kind of say, I will believe God. Put your faith up there. Say, I know what God said, and God, who cannot lie, is the one that I put my trust in.

And I will not receive those doubts. It doesn't mean they won't try to get at you. But they won't get you.

And you will not waver. Just because a doubt enters your mind doesn't mean you're wavering. If you cast it out.

Say, I'm trusting God. I will not dishonor God by thinking that his word is not true. I cast that thing down.

And so, if you have had occasions of doubt, where a doubt comes into your mind, that doesn't necessarily mean that by that evidence that you're necessarily wavering in your faith. It may be that you're being attacked. Your faith may be under attack.

And you can know if you're wavering or not by whether you're standing firm on your convictions. Whether at those moments you say, wow, gosh, maybe God isn't telling the truth. Now that you mention it.

Now that it does not cross my mind, maybe I shouldn't believe in God. Maybe the word isn't true. If that's where you're coming from, then you're wavering.

But, you know, I say, well then I guess I'm not a Christian. Well, you can stop wavering any time you decide to. You can simply decide to believe God.



This is something I have a hard, hard time understanding about Christians who worry. Why worry? Well, you know, I just can't help it. I don't want to worry, but I just get worried.

No, you don't just get worried. You can just say, I won't worry. Can't you? Can't you just say, I'm not worried about it.

If God's in charge, I won't worry. Well, then I'd still be worried. No, you're tempted to worry.

But temptation is not the same thing as the sin itself. The devil might say, why don't you worry? But you just answer, because I don't have to worry because God's in charge of things. And I won't worry.

I refuse to worry. It's a state of mind that is unacceptable in the eyes of God and unacceptable to me. And I will not accept it.

Because Jesus commanded me not to worry. He's commanded the scripture about that. And I know why people don't just make that decision.

I'm going to believe God. That's how you get saved. You decide, I'm going to trust Jesus Christ instead of whatever else comes my way.

And that's how you're supposed to walk. You live in the same way as you got saved. You got saved by saying, I will believe this and this is what I will believe till the day I die.

And not only that, I'll believe this. And I'll believe this. And I'll believe whatever God says.

Because I will believe God. And I will not waver from that position that I'm taking. There may be times when I'm bombarded with doubts about a particular issue, but I will not waver on it.

It's one thing to have rocks thrown at you. It even hits you in the head. It's another thing to run away because of the rocks or to succumb.

You can stand there and take the pelting and say, I'm going to stand anyway because I know that God is true. And I'm not going to receive the doubts. Well, we'll have to take a break here because we're out of time.

We'll pick up verse 9 next time.