

JAMES

“He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice (טִפְּשׁוּ), to love mercy (*to love hesed*, אֶהְבֶּתָּ חֶסֶד), And to walk humbly (הִצְנַתָּ) with your God?”

Micah 6:8

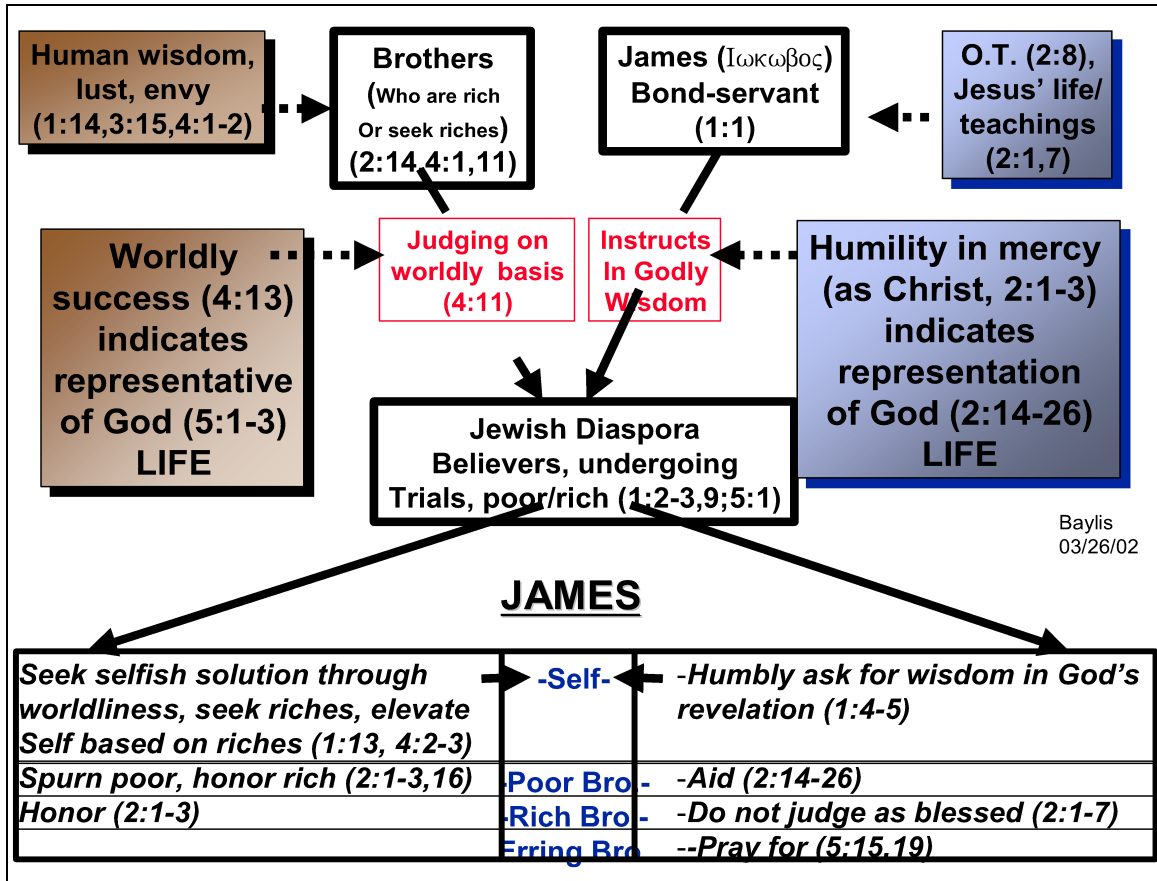
"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice (κρίσιν) and mercy (ἔλεος) and faithfulness (πίστιν); but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others."

Matthew 23:23

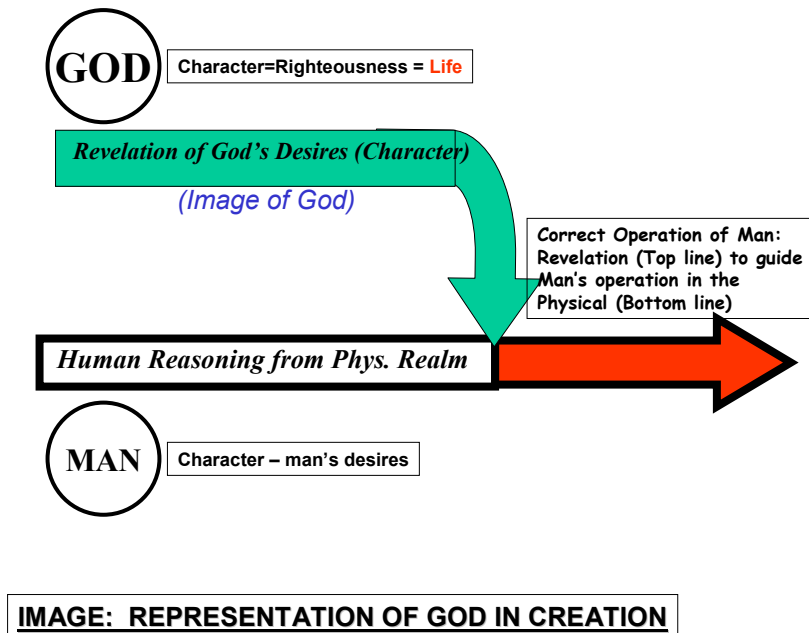
Note to the Reader:

*[It is highly recommended that one should view the **Biblical Story videos** to understand James place in the story and his references to the Old Testament at www.BiblicalStory.org]*

*[Please read the **“Introduction to James”** prior to these detailed notes. This will give an understanding of the basic approach to James so one can understand the two sides of the argument clearly. This can be viewed at www.BiblicalStory.org , “Resources,” “Commentaries,” “James” .]*



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Book Background (What prompted the writer to write?)

The situation¹ was such that the poor were being treated as unspiritual (2:1-4), defamed and cheated (5:1-5), while the rich were honored and considered as spiritual within the assembly² (2:1-4).

Definitions

Faith: Faith is one's concept of the character (and the promises from that character) of God. In James he deals with the *content* of the faith. Thus one may believe in Jesus Christ and identify in the Christian community of believers (are saved), but yet not fully understand the character of God as it relates to having a complete faith (or a perfect faith).

All faith must be based on knowledge of the character of God. The antagonist realizes (2:1) that Jesus is His Savior. However, beyond that he adds his own human wisdom and believes that God enables man to bring about success through his own cunning abilities (selfish ambition, 3:14). He believes, like the Pharisees in the gospels, are works of the Law. Thus the antagonist believes in Jesus plus self-help (i.e., “works of the Law”) to success. Thus when one is confronted with a trial they respond in order to bring about personal success, usually in honor or in riches.

James, on the other hand, believes in God and Jesus (i.e., “faith”), but that faith (content of) must include *hesed*, or the character of God that *acts* mercifully toward the needy. Thus James states that one’s faith must include the concept of *hesed* and adopt it for one’s own character. Thus when confronted by a trial, one responds out of *hesed*. Thus James says “faith” (knowledge of God) must include “works” (*hesed*, or the sacrificial love of God)>

Both Antagonist and James Claim to Have Faith

Most interpreters see that both the antagonist and James claim to have “faith.” However, this is where it stops since they then argue whether one’s faith is “enough” or “strong” or perhaps “effective.” All of these are trying to determine if one’s faith is

¹ There does not seem to be one inciting event that caused James to write. It is more likely that he was writing to more than one church, to Jews dispersed.

² James wrote to the 12 tribes of Israel dispersed throughout the Gentile lands. They were now a part of the church, but not likely in one church. James calls it synagogue in 2:2 and church in 5:13.

“real.” However, it is not degree or realness that is the difference, but a very clear difference in *content* or *what* they believe.

The true source of faith must always be the Scriptures. Both claim an identity with the God of the Scriptures and salvation through His Son Jesus Christ (2:1). Yet in claiming that the Scriptures are the basis, they have differing content. The antagonists' is sourced in a human reasoning (lusts, 1:13-16), so that interpretation of the text is similar to the Pharisees of the Gospels. Thus he interprets with bias on what brings about his fleshly pursuit of success.

James will question the *content* of their faith based on their confession (which reveals the content of their faith or their justification) and their motivation (pursuits which reveal the true belief that they hold which are actually part of what they believe, i.e., faith). James will basically say that if their pursuits and/or confession are self-serving (prohibited in the O.T.) instead of humble deeds of mercy (promoted in the O.T.), then the faith that they hold is errant and their deeds are unjustified.

For James there are two kinds of faith, one is incomplete and the other is complete. The incomplete faith is one that identifies with God and Jesus Christ (i.e., they are saved and identify with the church). The incomplete people then add to that their own abilities to pursue success. The complete faith is what the former holds plus the sacrificial love of Jesus demonstrated in them for their pursuits (called *hesed* in the OT). Thus the “hearer” is the former and the “hearer and doer” is the latter. Faith without works is a faith without *hesed*.

Summary: James' point is that one's faith with regard to motivation is the most important aspect of one's being. That faith's content, however, must include works (i.e., *hesed*), or sacrificial mercy given by God to the believer to give to others. Thus this character must act in a merciful way. The outcome will be whatever it is, but will always be on behalf of God and always will be sacrificial.

The antagonist will claim that the central evidence is not one's content of complete faith, but that the beneficial outcome that is the judge. So if he has riches or honor, then he feels that he has accomplished the works of the Law and thus his faith is justified as being the right motivation.

Note Well: Both James and the antagonist claim to have 'faith', and both claim to have 'works'. But the definition (content) of both faith and works are different than each other. The question is, 'Who is right?'

Note in the following verse spoken by the Antagonist how both James and the Antagonist are both referenced as having faith and works but they are clearly different.

James: Faith and Works

“Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.” (James claims that faith needs works as part of its content).

Works: Character motivation (part of the faith) that acts on behalf of God (as known by the Scriptures) which are self-sacrificial for the benefit of others and do not bring a visible, measurable result to the actor.

Faith: A God who has acted toward the believer to reveal Himself as a self-sacrificing God to give mercy in Christ (salvation) in addition to physical benefits to enable him to serve others with the gospel and food and clothing.

Antagonist: Faith and Works

“You (James) have faith and I (Antagonist) have works. You (James) show me your (James’) faith without the works and I (Antagonist) will show you (James) my (Antagonist’s) faith by my (Antagonist’s) works.” (The antagonist claims that his works (results) justify that he has the correct content of faith.)”

Works (called sin by James): Rewards from God for obedience; visible, self-beneficial, results (measurable self-success).

Faith (called lust by James): Whatever concept of God that brings those results (i.e., God is rich and desires His children to be rich; Deuteronomy 28; visible rewards for obedience, lack of reward for disobedience).

Works

These are defined differently by both the antagonist and James. James says the works are the motivation of faith, part of the faith, and it is particularly *hesed*, or the sacrificial mercy that comes through Jesus Christ.

The antagonist claims that works are the result of a correct faith, that is, they are the profit that comes from faith. So he measures his faith by whether it brings forth works, or profit, or beneficial results.

The tongue

This is one's speech. It is as a standard, one's confession, or one's justification for their relationship to God. The tongue expresses one's heart. Thus if one is judgmental toward a brother, he then reveals his heart

(his true theology) as one of self-righteousness. One is to do works (merciful) in accordance with the Scriptures, to testify (and speak) in accordance with that view of God. If one blesses God and curses men it shows their heart of self-righteousness.

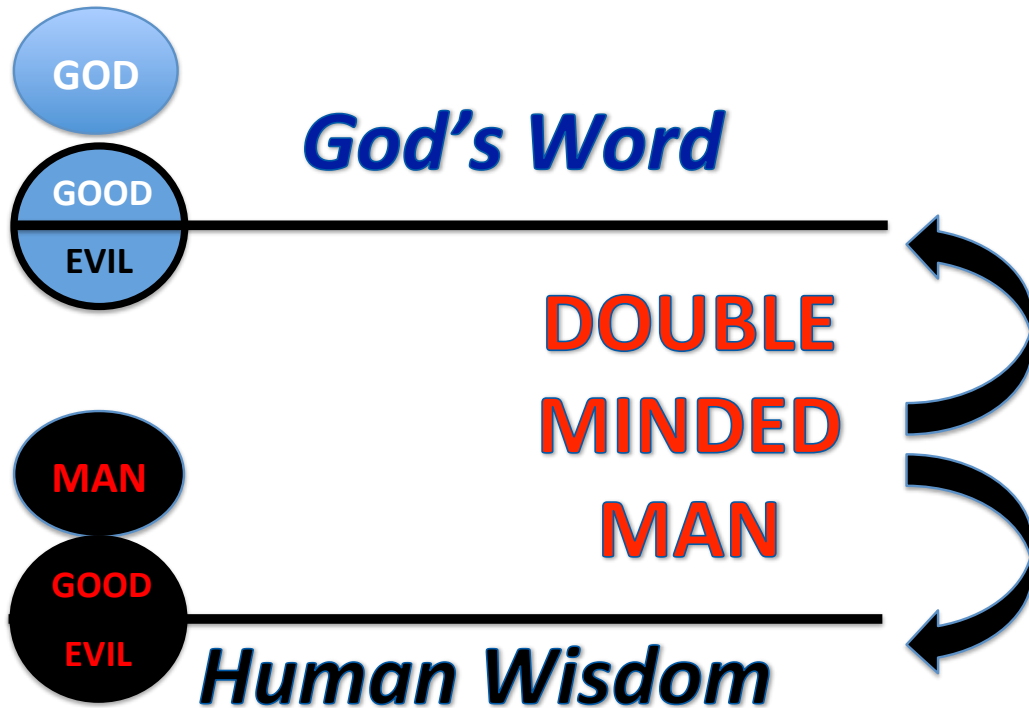
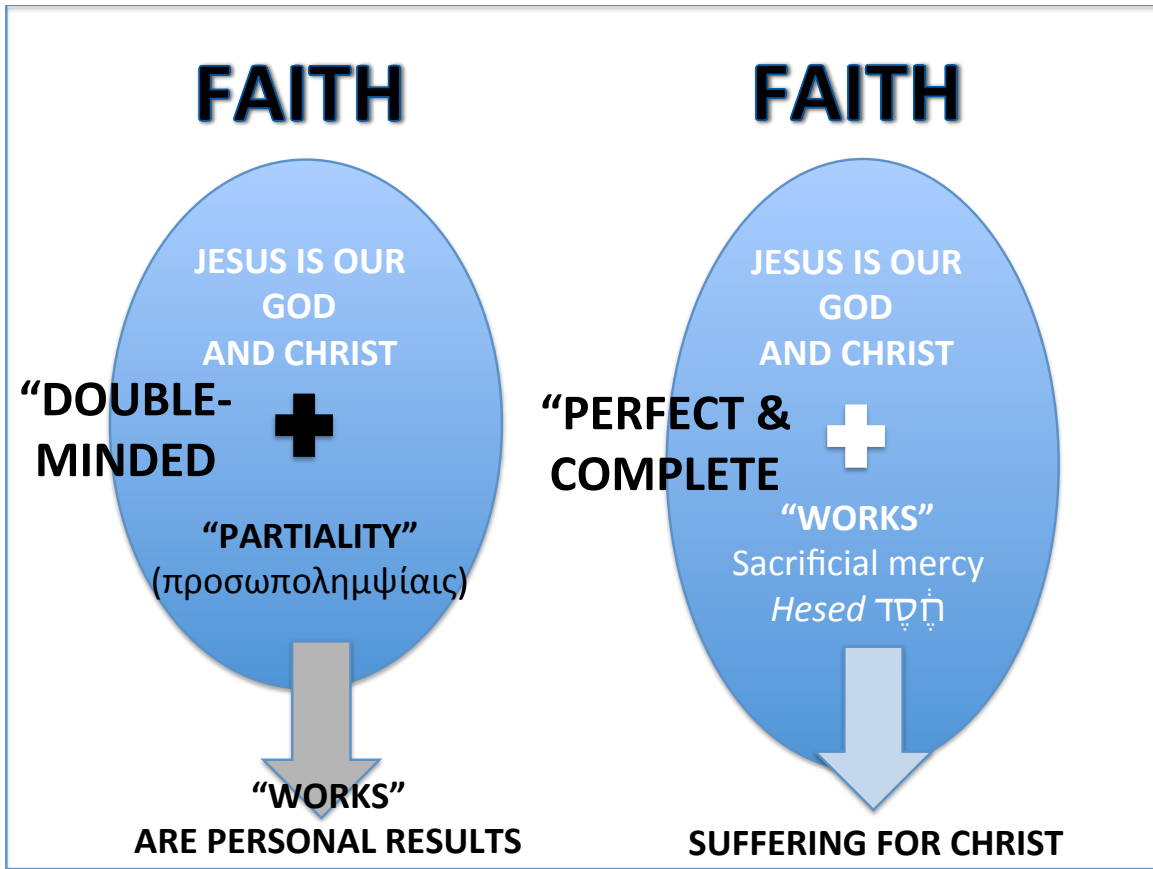
Pride This is one's self-perception that he/she has some validity before God that is resident in their person or in their own righteous deeds. Their speech and deeds will glorify themselves.

Humility This is the perception of the revelation that he/she is depraved before God and needs His righteousness. Thus, this person asks for the understanding of God's righteousness and how it is imputed to him, and he will be thus merciful to others, since he realizes that men are all unworthy.

Trials These are anything that interrupts one's good life or the life that one feels they deserve. These are temptations to do evil, that is, to solve one's trials through selfish actions. But one should be joyful because the trial gives them the opportunity to express their faith, that is, sacrificial mercy, *hesed*.

Argument of the Book

- Problem:** Those who have believed in Jesus Christ (1:21 2:1) have forgotten the humility with which they had when they came to Jesus Christ, a humility exemplified by Jesus Himself as He gave Himself for the hopeless (2:1). (This was understood at the point of salvation; that is, Jesus' mercy, their hopelessness.) Their forgetfulness has resulted in a return to human (innate) wisdom based on self-elevation evidenced by riches (5:1-3). These are proclaiming themselves as in the will of God ("blessed", 1:25, 5:11), His representatives (1:13), but are actually in reality opposed to God, and are His enemies (4:4) are in fact, dead (2:17) and poor (1:9-10).
- Solution:** The believer is encouraged to humbly return to the revelation obtained from God of righteousness in Jesus Christ that saved him (1:5, 4:6-10) and thus to respond to temptations in humble service. This will result in humility and service of others based on the revelation (like Christ). Based on the revelation of God (and not circumstances) he knows that his religion is worthwhile ("blessed") and he is alive (1:27). Thus when the test comes, we will have joy (1:2) instead of anger, considering it an opportunity instead of an affront to his self-preservation (1:20).
- Theology:** The theology of the book is based on the progression of the Biblical Story. James points out that they are in an age of suffering and endurance looking toward the bodily resurrection and the kingdom.



- I. **Life is to walk in the wisdom of God.** The wisdom of God (the faith) directs one to respond with sacrificial mercy (*hesed*) when confronted by a temptation to do evil to a brother³. On the other hand the antagonist pursues successful, self-glorifying results, which he claims are from God, but in truth are sourced from his own selfish ambition (lusts) which disregard the brother (1:1-3:18)

- A. James is the author and dispersed Israelites are the readers (1:1).

The author is a man named James (Greek: *Jacob*), who identifies himself as an enslaved follower of Jesus. The readers are Israelites who were dispersed throughout the Gentile nations. One of the things to note is the “dispersed” issue. These Jews would have had a kingdom mindset which required living in their inheritance; that is, the Land of Israel. Now they are suffering hardship in Gentile lands where they would not be respected for their Jewishness and especially not their Christianity. Thus, James is going to call for endurance in sacrificial mercy without immediate reward instead of appropriating Pharisee type behavior that, like the Gentiles, pursues immediate self-gratification in the present.

1:1 James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad, greetings⁴.

Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ χαίρειν

- B. If one possesses the wisdom of God’s character (i.e., faith) they will express joy⁵ because that knowledge allows one to . . . (1:2-21).

³ The word “temptation” or “trial” here is a temptation to respond to a difficulty in an evil way, or in a manner on the basis of human reasoning as opposed to the instructions in the word of God. These temptations are those that are interruptions to a successful life. James will change this to an opportunity to exhibit one’s mercy given from God as opposed to success for oneself.

⁴ The word for “greetings” is the same word (though an infinitive) as the word “joy” in the next sentence (though a noun). Thus this is more of a greeting of “joy” and then the exhortation to be joyful.

⁵ On the surface, James might appear to be reflecting a response that was not present in the Old Covenant. Within the Old Covenant existed the hope of a partial kingdom and judgment on the persecutors. So there was delay and one was to persevere in proper responses as well. Thus the believer was always to respond in faith (God was merciful), and extend mercy, hoping that things would ultimately come to pass. In Solomon the partial kingdom and reward was brought forward. Yet it was only a partial fulfillment that anticipated Christ and the ultimate kingdom. Now that the King has appeared, the guarantee in time has been made, and the believer knows he has the

- understand life through the knowledge⁶ of God's Word
- be complete and whole in their faith
- be rich in the value system of God

This first section is contrasting two contrasting groups who both claim to be, and believe they are, godly, but one group is not. The identifiable factor is their response to temptations to do evil. The godly ones are those who act on God's revelation (sacrificial mercy in patient endurance) versus those who act on their own lusts (selfish ambition to obtain successful visible results).

Temptations (Trials):

Temptations are things that oppose the visible material success or honor of the believer. Thus personal material pursuits that directly relate to one's honor are the goal of a temptation.

The antagonist claims godliness is pursuing honor through materialism. He feels his godly reward is honor from others in the assembly. He thus exhorts others, like a poor brother, to be godly and pursue materialism as he has (2:15-16). To him his materialism is such a high godly goal that he will take advantage of the humble, unselfish, brother to gain riches (5:4).

kingdom as a possession but must endure in patient endurance to the coming of the King. Thus, he has joy because he has assurance of the Kingdom, and considers it a privilege to stand up for the King (suffering, humble service, extending mercy) in the same fashion as the King endured. This appears to be a reference to clarifying Jesus words in Matt. 5:4. Those who mourn have been comforted in the coming of the King (1st appearance). Now they have joy. Refer also to Isaiah 61:1-3, prime verses reflecting the two-part coming of Messiah. There is an aspect in which they mourn and groan (Romans 8) because they are not with the King. However, they do have joy because they are walking with the King and get the opportunity to act on His behalf during temptations.

John 14-16 prepared the apostles for that Messianic Word and Jesus says there that their joy may be full. In addition, the reference may be to Matt. 13:20, where the second soil receives it with much joy, but falls away due to persecution, etc.

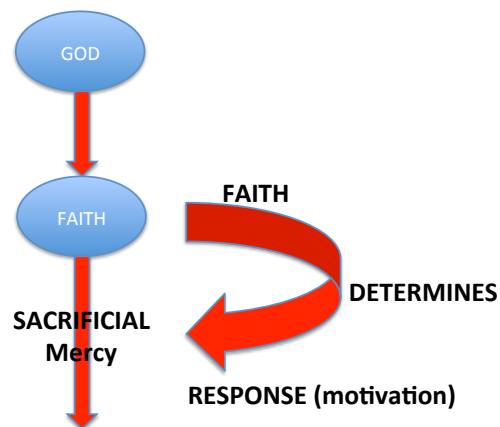
⁶ Perception of God (as revealed in His Word) is the "understanding" which is unavailable to the unbeliever. Yet the believer, who has entered into salvation based on this belief, may also ignore the revelation in his sanctification and create his faith from his own lusts. It is only from that same fountain of revelation that saved him that the believer may become sanctified.

On the other hand, the response of the truly godly is to extend self-sacrificing mercy and be patient (as the character of Christ and the Father). Temptations (trials) thus are seen as an opportunity to operate as God operates. Thus he seeks honor only from God, not men, and pursues acting unselfishly to extend mercy. His true imitation of God's character is of such a high goal that he will give up his pursuit of materialism to sacrificially give for the sake of those whose status is so low they cannot give him honor nor return any material wealth (1:27).

There are two sources of wisdom:

- **God:** This wisdom is from above (revelation in the Scriptures) and acts to give sacrificial mercy (*hesed*).

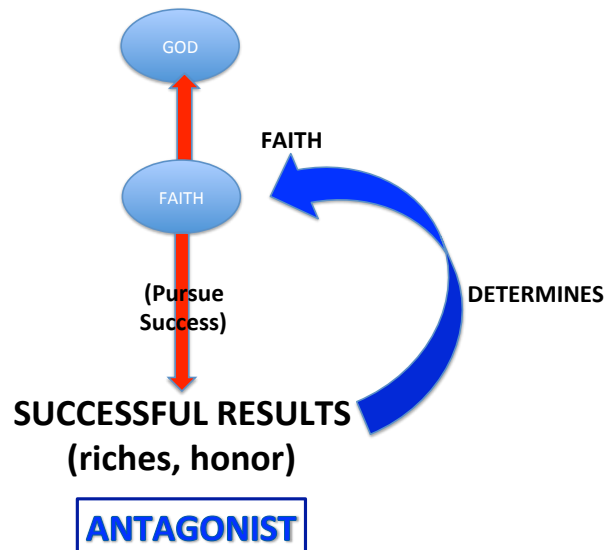
The believer must measure everything only on the word of God. Since the word reveals that humble, unseen (see the opposite philosophy, the Pharisees in Matt. 6:1-20) actions of sacrificial mercy (not specific deeds or specific results), derived from the character of God are godly, he must act without pursuit of results and patiently await reward in the kingdom.



JAMES

- **Human wisdom:** This wisdom is demonic and selfish, originating in one's lusts

The earthly Adamic mind (lust) measures everything by worldly success as honored by others. Thus he pursues immediate results, which glorify himself, not God. He must have measurable success that is identified with himself.



1. Life: Those who know the revelation of God respond to temptations to do evil⁷ with joy because they are able to act on behalf of God in humble patient endurance.⁸ (1:2-4).
 - a. A believer is to judge his situation as joyful when he is confronted with temptations⁹ that make him want to respond in an ungodly way, because he has an opportunity to act on behalf of God (1:2).

1:2 Consider it all joy¹⁰, my brethren, when you encounter various temptations,

⁷ The definition of “temptations” occurs in 1:14-15.

⁸ “Enduring” here is following the example (the faith) of the Lord Jesus Christ. Basically this is humility, suffering now for the sake of others and elevation by Christ later (based on the revelation).

⁹ “Trials,” or temptations, here are anything that confronts a believer's character. His natural response is always one of self-interest, and thus the opposition is considered an affront to his purpose. He may thus, consider it undeserved since it appears to be a bother to his righteous character (someone of less status sinning against him) and thus he would respond with anger or impatience or greed. However, he must consider revelation as interpreting the confrontation, and if his character is that of a believer, then he considers it an opportunity to represent the guarantee of the Messiah of the kingdom, and thus responds with an opportunity to represent God even though the visible reward is not immediately available or seen.

¹⁰ “Joy” here is because one enjoys giving mercy to one who asks. Thus if one faces trials, that is someone needs mercy, the believer gets joy because he gets to give on

Πᾶσαν χαρὰν¹¹ ἠγήσασθε, ἀδελφοί μου, ὅταν
πειρασμοῖς περιπέσητε ποικίλοις¹²

Joy [opposite: complaining, anger] is the response of the believer when he is gets an opportunity to act for God in the face of being tempted to respond badly from selfish ambition [opposite: sacrificial mercy]. The actual temptations will vary but will always be according to the world's values (material gain, honor, self-elevation).

- b. Responses that are faithful to the Word of God make a believer a complete in his faith and himself (1:3-4).
 - 1) The Word of God reveals that humble endurance (lack of visible results) is the proper working out¹³ of an accurate content of faith¹⁴ (1:3)

3 knowing that the testing¹⁵ (lit.: "approval," see 1:12) of your faith produces (lit.: "works out to") endurance.

behalf of God. God has joy for doing the same. Deuteronomy 30:9, Luke 15, 1 John 1:4 (apostles).

¹¹ Here this is the same root as "greetings" in v. 1.

¹² The word here is "varied" or "various." This is purposeful as he will say you will get varied trials/temptations, but you should have an unvaried response, that of Scripture which does not vary, since it should always be an unselfish response. The unbeliever will have a varied response based on the various trials.

¹³ The word here is κἀπεργάζεσθαι, which is the same root as "works" or "works out".

¹⁴ "Faith" is always based on a revelation of God in His Word. In James "the faith" is the belief in Jesus Christ as the fullness of forgiveness and the imputation of the new life. In James the reader experienced this at salvation and the question now is whether he will continue to operate on that initial understanding of God's mercy to him and give it to others.

¹⁵ The word here is *dokimion*. This word indicates a trying to prove what its contents are. It does not change the contents, only tells what they are. The normal sense is that of purity, and the test shows its purity, or here it is correct content. The same base word is used in 1:12 for "approved" and thus the meaning here. The correct content of faith will be proven in that it is, and does, endure.

γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν.

“knowing” The believer is well aware from revelation what James is about to say, and this is his confidence (since he will not be able to count on seeing results) and must respond to this revelation.

“approval” This is simply that faith is undergoing a procedure to demonstrate its validity with respect to God. It is being “tested.” But that is not quite the right word as it is already correct as seen from the Word of God, but now it is being validated as correct or approved by the way that it acts.

“works out to” This is a key word here. The faith, which is the believer’s character, is going to operate. It will operate according to God’s character, not selfish ambition.

“patient endurance” This is to say that the character action is solid and unchangeable. It does not act to bring about visible successful results, but simply to continue to act (patient endurance in acting). The point that one has patience means that he cannot see results or reward.

These initial statements reveal the basic truth of James as he opposes the antagonist. James states that the true content of faith from God is one’s only motivation and that motivation is always consistently the same. On the other hand, the only thing consistent about the antagonist is his pursuit of self-honoring materialism.

Antagonist: RESULTS are important, riches, honor

James: MOTIVATION is important, humble sacrificial mercy.

- 2) The Word of God reveals that faith, which is sacrificial mercy with patient endurance, brings the believer to a point where he represents God¹⁶ (1:4)

4 And let endurance have its perfect result¹⁷ (lit.: “a complete/perfect work”), that you may be complete (“complete/perfect”) and complete (“whole/complete”), lacking in nothing.

ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω, ἵνα ᾗτε τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροὶ ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι.

The antagonist is arguing that he is self-sufficiently successful with regard to the material world. Yet James argues that material wealth and self-sufficiency is not what makes one complete, but that if one is operating on God’s wisdom and enduring in sacrificial mercy, then that one is complete or perfect with respect to God because they are acting for God.

Note here that James is speaking of one’s faith as being complete, but then moves to one being complete if their faith is complete. Thus the person is identified in their relationship with God in the same way that their faith is complete in respect to God.

A believer who has the correct operational faith is “lacking nothing” even though he may be poor in material wealth, because he is rich with

¹⁶ This is the meaning of “perfect and complete”, literally “perfect (complete, mature, final) and sound”. It indicates the faith that is operating has come to a point where it is on the basis of the word of God alone and not giving into the desire to respond with human wisdom. “Sound” is related to doctrine, which is opposed to being “double minded” (1:8). This is not saying that the believer has reached as state of perfection, only that in his response to temptations he has acted according to the revelation of Jesus Christ and not according to human wisdom. This is a reflection of the use of the word in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:48) where the same word is used (τέλειος), “Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

¹⁷ ἔργον

God's values. The antagonist dishonors the poor man because being poor he is "lacking" in material success and assumes he is lacking in relationship with God.

2. The way to have the "Wisdom of God" is one must humble oneself and ask to obtain knowledge from God's Word as the only source of truth (God gives His self-revelation generously). However, if one is going to judge the revelation of God from his human wisdom (selfish ambition, lusts) then God will not give His wisdom¹⁸ (1:5-8).

God's character is only discovered through God's self-revelation. Man, from his own perspective, cannot obtain it because man's perspective is self-centered and ambitious. Since God desires man to represent Him, and man cannot get this wisdom on His own, God is generous to give it to those who ask humbly (know its value but cannot obtain it otherwise). However, the self-centered man who judges from his own wisdom will not get anything because he does not glorify God but himself. Thus, while this man might claim to know God, he only uses God to explain his own human lustful activities.

- a. He should ask¹⁹ and God will give it to him (1:5).
 - 1) The way that man receives God's understanding is to ask (1:5a)

1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask

Εἰ δὲ τις ὑμῶν λείπεται σοφίας, αἰτείτω

¹⁸ James is not speaking of wisdom in the sense of asking God for specific solutions regarding day-to-day choices (although one should still ask for those), but is speaking of the understanding of the Word of God as opposed to the innate human understanding of the world's values, particularly in the aspect of motivation, that of *hesed*. God has promised to give this wisdom to anyone who asks (Matt. 7:7-11). To the one who comes to Him, God gives a perception of Himself in His gift of salvation through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ.

¹⁹ This is a parallel reference to Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 7:7, where one is told to ask for God's mercy, which requires that he understands God's mercy). Man must ask for understanding (faith) of God's word, and then having understood it, must act (*hesed*) on God's word.

This is much like the Sermon on the Mount where one is to ask for the righteousness of God, which is the same as His wisdom. One who asks realizes that he has no ability to access this wisdom from his own perspective and that it is valuable and he needs it. Thus this one recognizes the immense sovereignty of God as the source of all wisdom and the immense hopelessness of man as a depraved being.

- 2) God is unlike those of the world²⁰, and is gracious and impartial, not giving according to the world's perception of worthiness. Thus God will give His wisdom as He has promised to those who ask and does not rebuke them for asking (1:5b).

1:5b of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach,²¹ and it will be given to him.

παρὰ τοῦ διδόντος θεοῦ πᾶσιν ἀπλῶς καὶ μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος καὶ δοθήσεται αὐτῷ

A major point here is the character of God. He is not partial to the rich or the poor as man is. Thus he gives to the humble regardless of their status. He does not reproach one for not having status as the rich man does in 2:15-16.

James is referencing Deuteronomy 10:17-18 where God is not partial to the rich or poor, but shows love to the widows, orphans and aliens, who have not position to bring him honor.

²⁰ In the gospel era the Pharisees perceived God as a judgmental God without being merciful. Refer to the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30).

²¹ It is clear that God gives to all men, even sinners. However, this verse seems to indicate God's treatment of those who "ask." Since He gives generously, He will give to the asker. And He will not reproach him as in being biased as to rich or poor, as the antagonist does when one asks of him. 2:15-16 shows an illustration of this where one asks for food and clothing and is reproached.

“For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the widow and the orphan and shows His love to the alien by giving him food and clothing.” (Deuteronomy 10:17-18).

- b. He should ask totally based on revelation (as opposed to human wisdom, i.e., “humbly”)²² or his request will be rejected (1:6-8).
- 1) If the asker does not perceive God’s revelation as the *only*²³ means of his source of godliness, admitting his worthlessness and inability to perceive with his depraved mind²⁴, then he is worthless since the two values are incompatible (1:6).

1:6 But let him ask in faith without any doubting (lit.: “judging”²⁵), for the one who doubts (lit.: “judges”) is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

²² This indicates that if man is self-righteous, he has misperceived God. This is parallel to Matthew 7:6 where the instruction regarding “casting pearls before swine”. If the reader does not perceive himself as evil and God as holy (like a swine does not see the value of pearls because he is a swine), then he does not regard the righteousness of God as something he needs. Thus he is not humble and thus he does not receive anything from God.

²³ This again has two parts. First of all one must value the revelation of God above his human reasoning. Second of all one must value what the word says regarding his actions (sacrificial toward brother as opposed to elevation above brother).

²⁴ This is a very important point here. As in the Sermon on the Mount (and also reflected in Romans 1—3), the problem with man is that he, not only fails to keep the Law, but he misperceives his own failure. He changes his failure into self-righteousness, thus illustrating his depraved mind. He has depraved deeds *and* a depraved mind. Thus his depravity becomes elevated through the perception of the human mind.

²⁵ This is the same word used in 1:4 and translated “to make distinctions between.”

αἰτείτω δὲ ἐν πίστει μηδὲν διακρινόμενος· ὁ γὰρ διακρινόμενος ἕοικεν κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ.

The issue of asking in faith is simply based on faith alone in the character of God as the only source of truth. In other words one must come to God totally believing that God is the sole source of truth. The “judging” (normally translated “doubting”) here is that the man uses his human wisdom to evaluate the revelation of God’s character, thinking that he and his human wisdom can assess truth to assess the revelation. This is commonly known as the “everyone has their own interpretation,” or the interpretation is “what it means to you.” Thus the text is seen through the person’s need to glorify himself or justify himself. In other words the revelation comes under his judgment as to what it can or cannot do. This is similar to James 4:11 where the antagonist is accused of judging the Law. This “judging” is simply assuming that someone has the ability to perceive the truth based on his own human assessment, e.g., looking at God’s revelation through human, self-centered focus. Thus, he not only judges the revelation of God, he judges his brother according to the same human wisdom.

This section is explained in 4:3 where the person asks with selfish motives and does not receive. Thus the person is judging God’s revelation and reinterpreting it that God wants him to pursue selfish interests as riches.

- 2) His misperception of himself and God brings no perception of the truth found in the Word (1:7).

1:7 For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,

μη γὰρ οἰέσθω ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ὅτι λήμψεται τι παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου

This will be expanded at the beginning of chapter 4 where James says that they do not receive because they do not ask, and when they ask, they

ask selfishly. Thus they are driven by self-centered success goals (human wisdom) and not by sacrificial mercy toward others (God's Word).

The asking is always asking for the "riches" of God, which is the wisdom to encounter trials. This is true riches. The asking for outcomes in the physical realm is not what is to be asked for, but for the will of God, which is that the believer is able to encounter trials with the proper confidence in God to act correctly. One should be asking for God's will (His desires), His wisdom, which would be acting for the benefit of the brother in Christ. To ask selfishly for prosperity and material success is not something that God's desire has promised to fulfill.

This is illustrated in 4:13-16, where the man pursues profit instead of the desires of God ("as God wills").

- 3) Since he has compromised his understanding of the revelation (perception of God) he will not understand the content of the revelation since it is always modified by his own errant perceptions (1:8).

1:8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his paths.

ἄνθρωπος δίψυχος, ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ

The man who is now viewing God's revelation through the perception of human wisdom is called "double-minded" or "judging." The essence of this is that he is unstable since he varies his perception of truth based on his circumstances, and thus he is unreliable to perceive truth. Note that he uses the word for "paths" here (translated "ways") to indicate the path he is going down is not the sanctificational path but a path to death.

Note again the use of the word unstable. The antagonist is unstable in his belief since it varies on how it can fulfill his success. Thus his

paths are also unstable since they also vary in order to produce his success not God's glory.

3. God's word reveals the ***humble endurance (patience), which is the correct content of faith***, is that a man who knows God's word may be humbled (low) in the world's estimation but should consider himself elevated (high) in God's eyes, knowing that he has an eternal reward while those with their values of the world will pass away (1:9-12).

a. The man who knows God's word, who will be low in world's estimation (poor), should be proud (high) of his elevation before God (1:9)

But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position;

Καυχάσθω δὲ ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς ἐν τῷ ὕψει αὐτοῦ,

The phrasing of this sentence clearly opposes what the antagonist thinks. He believes through his human reasoning that a brother who is of lowly position in the world's eyes is in fact of low position before God. James says that this lowly man should "boast" in his high position with God. James uses the word "boast" as a play against the antagonist who is boasting in his worldly position of elevation. Thus while using the word "boast" is interesting since the man actually is humbled, it is not used in the sense of actual "boasting" in himself before others (that is the position of the antagonist to seek glory from others), but is the sense in which he should have confidence to himself of his high position before God.

b. God's word reveals that a man rich in the world's view may have pride only in that he has become humble before God and received His Word (see also 1:5) (1:10-11).

1) God's Word is received by asking humbly, without regard for the world's view of oneself (1:10).

and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.

ὁ δὲ πλούσιος ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου παρελεύσεται.

- a) He is rich in the world's view.
- b) He is poor in God's view.
- c) So he should gain understanding of God's Word so he is proud that he is humble.²⁶

Now the contrast to those rich in the world's eyes is brought forth. The rich man needs to recognize that he needs to humble himself in the eyes of God for he will pass away. This is a very serious warning. His identity is his riches and they will pass and he will be left without identity before God.

- 2) God's Word reveals that his riches will pass away (1:11)

For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits²⁷ will fade away.

ἀνέτειλεν γὰρ ὁ ἥλιος σὺν τῷ καύσωνι καὶ ἐξήρανε τὸν χόρτον καὶ τὸ ἄνθος αὐτοῦ ἐξέπεσεν καὶ ἡ εὐπρέπεια τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἀπόλετο· οὕτως καὶ ὁ πλούσιος ἐν ταῖς πορείαις αὐτοῦ μαρανθήσεται.

James is not just stating his own word, but references the Old Testament for the validation of his statements.

The rich here are an allusion to the wicked of Psalm 37:1-2.

Do not fret because of evildoers, Be not envious toward wrongdoers. ² For they will wither quickly like the grass And fade like the green herb.

²⁶ Note the contrast here between the use of the words “proud” and “humble”.

²⁷ The Greek word here is indicative of the man's “way.”

Similarly, in Isaiah 40:6-8, the author contrasts the eternal Word of God (“wisdom” in James 1:5) with the way of the flesh and their prospects which will go away like the perishing flower.

⁶ A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?" All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

Again, in a similar vein regarding the finality of the rich man in his pursuits, Psalm 48:16-20 comments.

¹⁶ Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich, When the glory of his house is increased; ¹⁷ For when he dies he will carry nothing away; His glory will not descend after him. ¹⁸ Though while he lives he congratulates himself-- And though men praise you when you do well for yourself-- ¹⁹ He shall go to the generation of his fathers; They will never see the light. ²⁰ Man in his pomp, yet without understanding, Is like the beasts that perish.

Psalm 103:15-16 is also similar.

¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. ¹⁶ When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer.

Psalm 90:3-6 agrees regarding man.

³ You turn man back into dust And say, "Return, O children of men." ⁴ For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night. ⁵ You have swept them away

like a flood, they fall asleep; In the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew.⁶ In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; Toward evening it fades and withers away.

(Psalm 90:3-6)

[Matthew: Sermon on the Mount]:

*"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.
(Matthew 6:1)*

¹⁹ *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; (Matthew 6:19-20)*

- c. God's word reveals that the believer, who rejects the temptation to respond in a worldly way (self-elevation) but responds according to God's Word, will be blessed with a reward of life²⁸ (1:12).
- 1) After enduring through the trial, he will receive the crown of life.²⁹

²⁸ "Life" in James indicates the representation of God. Man is to represent God in this life and will be rewarded with that representation in the Kingdom.

²⁹ This reward is rule in the Kingdom as a representative of Christ. The crown signifies rule. "Life" signifies the representation of God. Refer to 5:7 where he asks the reader to be patient until the coming of the Lord. While the present tense representation of God results in "life" (representing God), it appears that this is speaking of a literal crown (not using it symbolically as a crown in the present tense sense of rule) since the believer is not ruling presently in this world, but that will come when Christ comes. Thus this seems to be eschatological only. It appears that the term *stephanos* (the crown of the victor) is just about always used as a literal crown, and thus a future crown and rule. Man is not ruling anyone now (cf. Romans 16:20, Hebrews 2:8) but has lost the earthly rule to Satan who will continue to (physically) rule until the appearance of Jesus Christ at the Second Coming. Christ has judicially defeated Satan at the cross, but delays the physical establishment of that victory until the return.

- a) The crown of life (reward of representation of God), Jesus, the Lord, promised to those who love Him.

¹² Blessed is a man who perseveres (i.e., endures) under trial; for having become approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὃς ὑπομένει
πειρασμόν, ὅτι δόκιμος γενόμενος
λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς ὃν
ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν.

This is the bookend to 1:2-4 for here are the same words or synonyms. “Endure” and “approved” (or “tested to demonstrate purity or correctness”). “Endure” is in the present tense. However, “become proven” is in the aorist, which relates to the future tense of “will receive.” Thus, the “become proven” precedes the future and indicates the “will receive” is following or the result of the “becoming proven.” In light of the discussion in James 5 regarding the reward as eschatological (“the Judge is right at the door”), this appears to be an eschatological reward. “Love Him” is the essence of desiring His character or His wisdom and who ask and are thus humble. They have standing now with God and will be rewarded visibly later in His presence.

The trial here is the same as in 1:2-4 but appears to be more than just one trial but the whole age or one’s whole life. The “once” (NAU) is an added word, so the indication is simply that this one is under trial during this age and having endured in faith he will receive this crown as a reward.

The crown is referenced in Revelation 2:10 for being faithful unto death, and Paul talks of a crown of righteousness for those who love His appearing and thus seems to be a similar crown. If one loves His appearing it indicates they are

suffering apart from His presence since they long to see Him and His wisdom and His righteousness. Those who are not eager to see Him are those who love this world and find their identity in their physical things apart from Him. 1 John also comments on this in 1 John 2:28.

²⁸ Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming."

This is all very indicative of the fact that the believer finds His value with God and not with men. Thus he receives his reward later with God and not now with men.

[Matthew: Sermon on the Mount]

¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12)

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 6:1)

and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:4)

and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:6)

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; (Matthew 6:19-20)

4. God's Word reveals that the world's view leads to death, an inability to represent God (1:13-16).
 - A. The errant world's view claims that God is the source of one's self-centered worldly (human wisdom) view and self-centered pursuits (like Adam and Eve).³⁰ (1:13).³¹

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

Μηδεὶς πειραζόμενος λεγέτω ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ
πειράζομαι· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπειραστός ἐστιν κακῶν,
πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδένα.

1. The antagonist to James is arguing from a human wisdom viewpoint but is saying that his motivations are from God. (1:13a).

The difficulty with the antagonist's viewpoint is that he is going to claim he is godly and that his motivation (faith) is from God. Thus, he does self-centered things that are justified from his human reasoning and claims they are from God. These ungodly drives are selfish ambition, jealousy, coveting, etc. Yet he, errantly, attributes these pursuits from God and thus feels elevated when he succeeds in wealth or honor.

[Matthew: Sermon on the Mount]

The allusion appears to provide a difficulty with Matthew 6:13, where it states in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (or the evil one)."

The problem here is that in the Sermon interpreters assume that since one prays "Lead us

³⁰ This is simply an understanding that man's mind and philosophy are the highest level of knowledge. It is very similar to Jude and 2 Peter in that man (whether or not he acknowledges God) is utilizing human wisdom that ultimately elevates self.

³¹ See 3:15 for a similar argument (as well as 2:18). The antagonist is self-centered in his teachings (which justify his self-righteous actions) and he claims it (his human reasoning) is from God. This is false, "lies against the truth" (3:15).

not . . . “ that God indeed does do this and the prayer is so that He won’t do something like that. However, this is a misunderstanding of prayers in the Bible. Typically these prayers like “Thy Kingdom come,” are not prayers that get God to bring the kingdom as if He wouldn’t do it if someone didn’t request it. God is going to bring the Kingdom since it is His character and promise to do so. The one praying is simply asking God to act on His character, as one knows He will.

Here in The Sermon on the Mount, one is not to assume that God might lead into temptation, but that God does not do that and one is praying to affirm God’s character. Notice from the next line, the prayer for God to deliver from the evil one. God’s character is again like that. In fact the two lines are reverse parallelism. That is, the positive (line 2) is the negation of the reverse (line 1).

2. God does not respond according to, nor is He the source of, a worldly (human wisdom) view (1:13b).

But James states clearly that God’s wisdom does not conform to human wisdom. It is totally disparate. Yet man would say that his wisdom and selfish drives are indeed from God since they bring him glory and honor. This is due to his perception that God wants him to be successful, rich and elevated. Thus he states clearly that his riches are from God and thus his selfish elevation.

The word “tempted” here is the same base word as that used by James to speak of man’s temptations or trials. In other words, God is not like man since He has no urges, desires or other motivation (wisdom) to conform to human wisdom, nor does any human wisdom come from Him. God does not have selfish ambition where He takes to Himself from man. God gives to man in sacrifice.

- B. The Word of God reveals that the world’s view leads to death (inability to represent God) (1:14-15).

¹⁴ *But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.*

¹⁴ ἕκαστος δὲ πειράζεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος· ¹⁵ εἶτα ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν, ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον.

1. One accepts the world's view because he is enticed by the lust of his flesh (self-elevating human reasoning) (1:14)
2. The lust of the flesh (self-elevating human reasoning) leads to sin (self-elevating activities) (1:15a).
3. Sin brings forth death (inability to represent God) (1:15b).

This is the process by which man's process actually works whereby he comes to self-centered actions, which bring forth the death of the person. First, the source of selfish activities is the man's evil character (lusts or literally "coveting"). When this has conceived (e.g., begun to live), it is on an unstoppable movement to "sin," or an action against God, and then finally it comes to its end or completion, the result of which is death. This contrasts with the rich man's concept of his own success shows in his results. James says the actual result is death.

This "accomplished" is actually the same base word as "completed" or "perfect" back in 1:2-4 but with "apo-" added as a prefix. Thus this man comes to his end, but it is a Satanic end, death.

[Motif]: This is a reference to Genesis 3 and Eve, where she used Satan as a source (which soon became her lust and now ours), which conceived sin and then death. The "birth" is a warning against the deception (of Satan) shown as the world's wisdom in 3:14-16, which is demonic.

- C. Do not be deceived regarding the Word of God (like Eve) thinking that self-elevating human reasoning is godly (1:16).

Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

Μὴ πλανᾶσθε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί.

This reference is similar to Eve. She said the fruit was good (i.e., godly) to eat, pleasant to look upon, and good to make one wise. The first two were true to observation, but God’s revelation had restricted them. She ignored God’s revelation for what she saw was good. (“Do not say when tempted, I am tempted by God”). Eve had said that her temptation was right. These antagonistic believers in this book are selfishly acting and are calling it good. In addition, this wisdom that she would receive from the serpent was a desirable thing in her reasoning. This is the same as man who argues that human reasoning is ultimate by which he can judge all things. He believes that his pursuit of riches and honor are given to him by God.

5. God's word reveals that the source of all godly things is God (i.e., wisdom) and that wisdom is not variable (1:17-18).³²

Every good thing given and every perfect³³ gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ’ ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγή ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα.

This is a contrasting statement to 1:14-15 showing a difference in source. 1:14-15 shows their self-centered desires are from lust. Here the wisdom of God is purely from above and nowhere else as source. It comes in Jesus Christ. The “from above” is a cross-reference to 3:15 where it is the wisdom that comes from above.

[Motif]: Following the contextual allusion to Eve in Genesis 3, now he moves to the perfect gift from Genesis 3:15 which is the Seed of the Woman, that is Christ. He is the One who will bring the character of God back to man so that He

³² The following verses bear a striking similarity to 1 Peter 1:22--2:2.

³³ “Perfect” here is the same word used in 1:2-4 to signify that this is God’s character, perfect, good.

can operate on it. In Christ there is no variation since He is God's character. The imagery of lights is likely Genesis 1 and a reference to God is light and the light of revelation in Christ.

- A. The source of all that is good³⁴ (as opposed to all that is evil) is God (which indicates wisdom, the revelation of God and thus the knowledge of how to represent Him) (1:17a).
- B. God is unlike those of the world's view (1:17b-c).
 - 1. He is not changeable, nor is His wisdom³⁵ (1:17b)
 - 2. He does not give any indication of change in His revelation³⁶ (1:17c).

The "not" here indicates an allusion to those who are following human wisdom and successful results as the determiner of what they believe. They change based on what gives them the best results and thus there is no consistent theology of God which is sourced from him alone.

- C. God has given us new life through the word He has given according to His character desires (1:18).

His desire (will, character) birthed us by the word of truth, so that we would be certain firstborns (or firstfruits) among His created beings.

Βουληθεῖς ἀπεκύησεν ἡμᾶς λόγῳ ἀληθείας εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τινα τῶν αὐτοῦ κτισμάτων.

Again, contrasting with 1:14-15 where sin and death are traced to their source of lust and birthed into sin, now life in the new believer is traced to its source, God's character and His desire, which is birthed into new life.

³⁴ All that God gives has been through His word. All of creation came about through His word. And the new creation comes about through His word.

³⁵ This is another subtlety indicating that God is not changeable (in doctrine) while his readers are (double-minded, 1:8). God recognizes and is consistently who He is and is opposed to the depravity of man. God is not in man's image at all.

³⁶ This illusion is to the readers who are mixing their faith in Jesus Christ (the revelation of God's aid to the hopeless) and their own self-elevating human wisdom (cf. 2:1).

Thus James has established the alternate source from lusts, the purity of the revelation of God's word.

1. God gave us the Word (1:18a).
2. Through this Word He made us the children to be³⁷ representatives of God in a new creation (1:18b).

Here again, believers are the firstborns, that is the set apart ones for God, as the firstborn was in the Old Testament. Note that Abel designated this as he brought forth also the "firstborns" of the flocks which was a Messianic sacrifice. From the Seed of the Woman would come all those who would be reborn.

6. God's Word reveals that a believer should respond to temptations by patience through hearing³⁸ (cf. 1:22) the Word of God³⁹, speaking⁴⁰ God's Word (cf. 3:1) and not responding in wrath⁴¹ toward a poor brother (1:19-20).

³⁷ The Greek phrase here (εἰς τὸ εἰσαί) indicates the purpose of salvation, "in order to be . . ."

³⁸ "Hear" (verb) is used only in three places in James (1:19, 2:5, 5:11). James 1:22, 23, 25 uses the noun i.e., "hearers," the Greek word, ἀκροατής (hearer). In all cases it is hearing the Word of God. It is never used of hearing a brother or some other source. This is also similar to the use in the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables of Matthew 13 where a hearer is one who is able to hear the Sermon, yet may not understand it and thus it does not take effect.

¹³ "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; ¹⁵ FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.' (Matthew 13:13-15).

³⁹ The point of "hearing" is that apart from hearing the revelation of God one does not know it. He is operating on human wisdom. Thus hearing is giving importance to it. But hearing does not guarantee alliance with it in a real way.

⁴⁰ The speaking here is the testimony of the mouth, which reflects the heart of Matt. 12. It can respond in anger toward a brother or speak the Word of God. Cf. 2:12, 4:11.

- A. These brothers already know from their initial belief in the revelation about God that they should listen to the word of God, be careful in their speech to teach God's word, and reluctant to exercise wrathful judgment over a poor brother (1:19).

You have known, my beloved brethren. now every man must be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow into anger;

Ἰστε, ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί· ἔστω δὲ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ταχύς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι, βραδύς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδύς εἰς ὀργήν·

Very simply, a believer must listen to the Word, then he should carefully act in speech toward a brother (or teaching, i.e., confession of one's heart) so as to reflect the word of God in his justification, and finally should avoid anger toward a brother. Anger⁴², or here wrath, is a judgment or vengeance. Thus one is taking action to execute judgment on a brother by wrath. Yet God is the One who exercises wrath and He alone can do this.

In viewing "hear," it is most closely linked with the Parable of the Sower and the Seed. In this case the reference is Luke 8:18.

⁴¹ The word here, normally translated "anger" carries with it more of a "wrath" or "revenge" act. This is not simply speaking or simply becoming mad at another brother, but a judgmental wrath based on human perception, i.e., poverty, etc. (see 2:12, 4:11). Its contrast would be patience, even when wronged. Anger when used in a like theological context is judgmental and expressed toward God or toward the object of God's mercy. Cain became angry (at God) for His elevation of Abel over himself based on Abel's faithful response, and he took it out on Abel by killing him. Jonah became angry with God for expressing His mercy toward the judgment-deserving Ninevites. The elder son became angry (Luke 15:28) with the Father for showing mercy to the undeserving son. In each case the anger is a judgment against God and the brother who expresses mercy when one feels they should have judgment expressed based on self-righteousness.

⁴² Anger here is interesting. If Eve is the model for 1:13-16, then the Seed of the Woman (Genesis 3:15) is the Model for the perfect gift from above in 1:17 and then in 1:18 that Seed brings us forth as the first fruits, and then Cain is the Model for the anger that does not achieve the righteousness of God ("Am I my brother's keeper").

⁸ "Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." . . . ⁹ His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant. ¹⁰ And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND."

¹¹ "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. ¹² "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. ¹³ "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ "The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. ¹⁵ "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. ¹⁶ "Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. ¹⁷ "For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light.

¹⁸ "**So take care how you listen**; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

(Luke 8:8-18)

Anger here is interesting. Since Eve is the model for 1:13-16, then the Seed of the Woman (Genesis 3:15) is the Model for the perfect gift from above in 1:17, and then in 1:18 that Seed of the Woman brings us forth as the firstborns, and then Cain is the Model for the anger that does not achieve the righteousness of God ("Am I my brother's keeper").

In the case of Cain and Abel, which appears to be the basis, Cain would not have heard *seriously* the revelation while Abel did. Cain, like the antagonist is justifying himself based on his own human wisdom (his sacrifice was according to human wisdom not revelation as Abel's was). Cain spoke quickly to oppose God and oppose his brother ("He told Abel" is his self-justification) and slow to anger is where he executed judgment on his brother. Cain was to be his brother's keeper because he was to represent God who was His brother's keeper in that He was sending His Messiah to die for the brother.

The "achieve" the righteousness of God is similar to Matthew 5:20 where "unless one surpasses the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees they will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Anger is not *complete* faith acting and is not to be associated with God's character as He is patient.

- B. Wrath toward a brother does not represent God (achieve⁴³ His righteousness) (which is given⁴⁴ as children of God (cf. 1:18) (1:20).

for the anger of man does not achieve (lit.: work) the righteousness of God.

ὀργή γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται.

The righteousness of God is again, His character. If man displays anger, it is not consistent with the character of God. Thus, it is coming from another source, that of man's lusts. Anger is a judgment based on the man's human wisdom, which vindicates oneself, not God. It is not that God does not have wrath, but it will be displayed to vindicate God's character, not man's, and it is in the future,

⁴³ This phrase "does not achieve the righteousness of God" simply means that one does not imitate God. In other words wrathful words on a humbled brother are unlike God who "gives to all men generously and without reproach" (cf. 1:5). Thus it is clearly not sourced from God, but from one's lusts.

⁴⁴ When one recognizes that God has given everything of value to him, it should humble them as servants to God and thus they would not elevate themselves above a brother, recognizing that God also gives poverty or riches.

not now. Thus man's wrath is from lusts, not God. It is always to vindicate one's own ego, not God's glory.

God's wrath is His own. Man is not to exercise vengeance on a brother. God will avenge all when Christ returns and in the mean time the brother is to be patient.

9. The conclusion is that a man should rid⁴⁵ himself of all the world's values (wisdom below) and ask God for the knowledge of His wisdom (from above) (1:21).

Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and the abundance of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

διὸ ἀποθέμενοι πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν καὶ περισσεῖαν κακίας ἐν πραΰτητι, δέξασθε τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον τὸν δυνάμενον σῶσαι τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν.

- A. The world's values are filthiness⁴⁶ and the causing of trouble⁴⁷ and these need to be removed from the believer's life (1:21a)
- B. The believer needs to gently⁴⁸ (e.g., toward humility as in "asking" (1:5)) receive the Word, which has initially been placed inside⁴⁹ when he became a believer (1:21b).

This refers to 1:5 where one humbly asks for the Word. However, it is the seed that has been implanted as in

⁴⁵ The word literally means, "lay aside". It seems to indicate that one should change his behavior. It occurs with the word for wickedness in 1 Peter 2:1 in a similar context.

⁴⁶ This word is a *hapax* in the New Testament, but indicates "filthiness", in general anything that opposes the holiness of God.

⁴⁷ The word here simply means "trouble" or "evil actions toward another."

⁴⁸ The word here means "in gentle consideration." It is a different word than "humble" in 1:9-10, yet the same word is used only in 3:13. It is not used in the gospels.

⁴⁹ This refers to the "law written in the hearts" of the New Covenant. This is the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the new life, and the recognition that man's own glory has been crucified with Christ, and now he is left only to glorify Christ through Christ-like deeds.

1:18, where it is birthed by the Word of God. This is a reference to the salvation given in 1:18. Man must return to that word. This is also the “seed” in Matthew 13 where the “sower and the seed” is discussed. The seed is the word, and there everyone’s outcome (i.e., fruits, confession) is based on their value and understanding of this seed.

- C. This knowledge is able to save⁵⁰ one's soul (allow him to represent God) (1:21c).

At this point, one must define “life” and “death.” Life is the character of God, the wisdom of God. For one to experience it, then one must have it given to them (through “asking.”) This character expresses life through sacrificial mercy toward the brother. This representation of God through His character will be seen in the eschaton as the believer receives rule (the “crown of life”), which he receives from Christ because he longs to be with Christ’s character.

However, death on the other hand, is not walking with God, or not being in His will or His desire. One then is walking according to the source of lust and self-centeredness. This is death, that of the first Adam, and has been cursed. It cannot represent God, and is totally human wisdom. This receives no reward in the kingdom since it does not long for the character of Christ, but longs for its own success here on this earth during this time.

Thus, the knowledge of the Word of God (1:5) is able to deliver one to life (walking with God), from death (walking in the evil character) and into a future reward.

- C. The response to persecution is perception of God’s word, which tells him to represent God, that is, to endure in humility (be a doer)⁵¹ (1:22--2:26).

⁵⁰ The two paths based on the reception (understanding) of God’s word are those where the believer may choose to walk on the basis of the revelation (humility, sacrifice of oneself for brother’s good, endurance in persecution for that belief) and he will *live* (both now and in the eternal state). The other path is that a believer may choose to resort to his own reasoning, denying the influence of the Word of God. He then will die in this life (lose his ability to represent God, though he may still live, cf. 1 Tim. 5:6) and will lose reward (the degree to which he is rewarded with representation) in the life to come. The real issue here (cf. footnote on 2:14) is whether they are in the will of God (i.e., delivered, blessed).

In the next section that extends through James chapter 2, James will deal with the issue of the content of faith and the difference between a “hearer,” who identifies with Christ, versus a “hearer and a doer” as one who not only identifies with Christ, but appropriates the sacrificial mercy (*hesed*) as part of the character of God (which acts toward the hopeless in need). James will first lay out the differences between the hearer and doer. Then he will move to an example of the “hearer only” since he only acts as an identifier (hearer) with God, but acts wrongly with regard to the seating in the assembly. The final part is the famous “faith without works” section, which deals with the same error, that of having a claim to faith, but the action of the character is not the character of God since it does not include sacrificial mercy that needs to be expressed (*hesed*). He will use the example in the church (2:15-16) of those who act toward a brother without *hesed*, and then move into the Biblical examples of Abraham and Rahab who both were able to deliver themselves and others through their perception of *hesed*.

1. The Word of God desires a man to be a doer⁵² (appropriate *hesed*) of its instruction not simply a hearer⁵³ (identification only) (1:22-27)

⁵¹ The “doer” here is not simply indicating that the person is doing works. The “hearer” is one who is associated with the word. This same concept is used in Romans 2 to indicate Jews who are associated with the Law as Jews, but are not doers. That means that they have not appropriated it for themselves as their character. So here the hearer is one who identifies with Christ (see 2:1), but is full of partiality or human wisdom as well and thus has not adopted Christ for himself in his character, that is, the use of *hesed* in his life. So he has not understood sacrificial mercy as part of his faith. This is the same as faith without works (sacrificial mercy), or the content of faith does not contain *hesed*.

⁵² The “hear” and “do” occurs frequently in Deuteronomy.

Deut. 5:27 'Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do *it*.'

Deut. 6:3 "O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do *it*,

The essence is that all Israel were “hearers”. But not all were “doers”. It was the difference between being a genealogical “son of YHWH” and one who was one by practice (representation). Thus all Israel was a “hearer”, but only the believers were “doers”. Thus is the usage in Romans 2 as Paul points out that one must keep the law. If he is simply a possessor of the Law (a Jew) then he is simply a “hearer”. If he is a believer in its fulfillment through Christ then he is a doer also (or can keep the Law fully himself.) Thus while these people in James are believers, they are relating to the revelation, and not doing it. That means that their perception of its ability to affect their lives is aborted. They thus use other means of belief to affect their lives, i.e., human wisdom.

The difference between a hearer and a doer is that the hearer identifies with the Word of God (i.e., is saved), while a doer is one who perceives the character of God, appropriates it so that he may live by it.

Now it is important to note that a hearer is one who identifies with Jesus and salvation (see 2:1), but instead of incorporating the *hesed* of God, uses human wisdom and self-beneficial success as his motivation.

- a. An undesirable hearer is one who identifies (only) with the Word of God and of Christ (1:22).

But become doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.

Γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου καὶ μὴ μόνον ἀκροαταὶ παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτοὺς.

The antagonist here (one who follows the character of man, but claims he is godly) is a hearer and not a doer. The point is that he is relating to the God of the Bible and His Son, Jesus Christ (2:1a), but has defined things differently per human wisdom (2:1b). Thus, he has related to the Word, but does not see it correctly, nor have the ability to see it change his life, thus he only identifies with it. The “doer” is one who actually understands it and adopts it to himself for his own truth. Note that the “doer” is the active part of the faith, that is the *hesed*, or the sacrificial mercy. Thus one with sacrificial mercy will act based on this character, and thus is a doer.

Thus the deceiving of themselves is similar to 1:16 where the context was that one was claiming God as the source of his lustful actions. Here the hearer (only) is also identifying with God, but not operating on God’s Word.

- b. A hearer of the Word of God who does not follow its instructions with the active character has lost his self-

⁵³ The Sermon on the Mount categorized everyone as a hearer of the Word (cf. 7:24-27 regarding the house built on the rock or on the sand). The difference is that one must act on the Word. Since James is not speaking of initial belief (cf. 1:21, the word implanted), he is applying the Sermon (as Jesus did) to believers urging them to continually base their actions on the word.

perception based on the Word of God, which he had at salvation (1:23-24)

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at the face of his birth in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

ὅτι εἴ τις ἀκροατῆς λόγου ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ ποιητής, οὗτος ἔοικεν ἀνδρὶ κατανοοῦντι τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ· κατενόησεν γὰρ ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀπελήλυθεν καὶ εὐθέως ἐπελάθετο ὅποιος ἦν.

The “hearer” is like a man who is able to perceive what he was born to become, but forgets it when he walks away, so also is the believer who has once perceived the purpose of the life that God had begotten at salvation, yet returns to human wisdom and its resultant self-elevation.⁵⁴

This relates to the one who had the “seed implanted,” but was now returned to the fleshly character. Thus, this one is unaffected by the true Word of God. He relates to it (hears), but is a “double-minded” man, that is, he is driven by the evil character, not by *hesed*.

- c. The doer of the Word of God has proper self-perception (revelation) and thus his attitude is selfless and serves God by acting toward the helpless brother. (1:25)

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

⁵⁴ The reason the person does not perceive himself is that having walked away from the mirror, he is unaffected in the sense that he returns to human wisdom, not the Word of God to perceive himself. James is relating the viewing in the mirror as the man’s salvation in Jesus Christ. It was in that moment that he perceived himself as a sinner, and needed God’s mercy. Now having walked on from the point of salvation (the mirror) he is walking, not according to the perception he had of himself then, but of a self-perception that he shares with the world, that of human wisdom. The human wisdom is part of the character that walks away. In other words what he is doing is walking on the same basis he was prior to his salvation, yet he is still relating to being saved, a Christian (cf. 2:1).

ὁ δὲ παρακύψας εἰς νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας καὶ παραμείνας, οὐκ ἀκροατῆς ἐπιλησμονῆς γενόμενος ἀλλὰ ποιητῆς ἔργου, οὗτος μακάριος ἐν τῇ ποιήσει αὐτοῦ ἔσται.

The parallel to the mirror example is the same, but here he uses the “complete” law or “perfect” law, which goes back to 1:2-4, which means that it reflects the character of God. The difference now is that, the “stoop to look into” person, is now impacted by the seed implanted. Thus this one again adopts the revelation and excludes the human wisdom component. The actions of this character are reflecting the character of God and this one is blessed, which means he is acting on God’s behalf, which is a blessing. Thus the deeds that come from this “doer” are God ordained deeds.

The question might arise as to how one is “blessed.” Typically one answers this from the fleshly component and speaks of physical rewards (e.g. a rich man is blessed because he is obedient). However, the point is that He is in God’s will. He knows he is acting on behalf of God, with the character that God has given him. That is true blessing.

This is similar to Abel who knew he was blessed (approved) because he conformed in his sacrifice to God’s word. Cain, on the other hand, thought he was approved because he had operated on his own human wisdom. Yet when God confronted him he found out quickly that God disagreed. But the point is that like Abel, one will know he is in God’s will because he conforms to God’s word and God’s character.

This is what Hebrews 11:3 claims, that by knowing God’s word, Abel found approval, the same word used here for the believer who faces trials and has his faith approved.

⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. (Hebrews 11:4).

- 1) The doer has God completed in Him through imputation at his salvation and continues in the revelation of His character⁵⁵ (1:25a)
 - 2) This includes the freedom from the obligation to the flesh of the Old Law, which was based on one's old character self-efforts⁵⁶ (1:25b)
 - 3) Enduring humbly based on the revelation (lit. "the doer of a work" or "hesed") is how one knows he is in the will⁵⁷ of God⁵⁸ (1:25c).
- d. The one who is wrathful⁵⁹ to brother in response has lost his true self-perception, and is thus a doer only since he only relates to the Word of God by identity not by truth (1:26)

If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.

Εἴ τις δοκεῖ θρησκὸς εἶναι μὴ χαλιναγωγῶν
γλῶσσαν αὐτοῦ ἀλλὰ ἀπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ,
τούτου μάταιος ἡ θρησκεία.

This relates to the anger of the preceding verses. The anger is expressed through the tongue as a judgment on the brother from one's own human wisdom perspective. This is like the one who looks in the mirror (gets saved through revelation) and walks away and then begins judging his brother from his own perspective just as before.

⁵⁵ The "perfect" law is the reference to the perfection of Christ (His character) that is imputed to the believer (mercifully).

⁵⁶ Under the Law, man had innately only the natural man that served self. The Law revealed his total depravity. Now man has been given the new nature that is able to please God. Thus man should abandon any justification of the flesh (self-righteousness) and humbly (since God has given him his life) seek to glorify God.

⁵⁷ The word here is μακάριος for "blessed" indicating that the one has "joy" (cf. 1:2) even though he may be suffering, knowing he is in the will of God through revelation.

⁵⁸ Refer to 1:12 for a similar concept.

⁵⁹ Again this term indicates that this anger is based on a judgment

Here the antagonist is thinking and assessing his own perspective, yet he thinks he is religious meaning that he says he is doing this in God's will or God as the source as in 1:13.

- 1) He thinks of himself as a representative of God⁶⁰ (religious) (1:26a)
- 2) He does not speak as God would speak since he is wrathful unjustly toward others (1:26b).
 - a) This is contrary to the word of God (unlike God).
 - b) He thus is deceiving himself, since he thinks he is judging properly.

The “deception” is exactly the character of the evil heart making clear perception (cf. the mirror illustration) impossible. The point is that his source is from his lusts (1:13-16) and thus is lying to himself.

- 3) His representation is worthless⁶¹, since it is of the world, not God. It does not bring life.
- e. The one who aids those who are poor in the world's view has a proper perception (of self and God) from God's word (1:27).

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

θηρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος παρὰ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανούς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν, ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου.

⁶⁰ This goes to the heart of the issue here. Some were thinking themselves to be ‘Godly’ yet were actually contrary to the revelation.

⁶¹ The word here for “worthless” is essentially “useless” and is a *hapax* in James. This is a different word, though apparently somewhat synonymous with the word in 2:20.

The illustration of the revelation of God's character in the believer is to operate toward those of hopeless status who cannot return the love that is shown to them. This is repeated throughout the Gospels when Jesus says that the love of God is toward enemies, who return only evil for good, while the Gentiles love those who can return the favor (Matt. 5:44-48).

- 1) (Deut. 10:18: God and the orphans and widows). Orphans and widows are seen by the world as hopeless, while God views them as being in need of his aid,⁶² thus the believer needs to aid these as God would.⁶³ The point is that the love of God is toward those who cannot return his mercy. The arrogant are rejected. The humble are received.
- 2) The believer needs to keep himself clean⁶⁴ of whatever the world values.⁶⁵

Again, this is a reminder that the evil character, human wisdom, is to be negated at all costs for the revelation.

[Matthew: The Sermon on the Mount]

⁴⁴ "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ "For if you

⁶² The number of times that Deuteronomy alone points out God's love for the widow, orphan and alien are many. Note that here the "alien" is not included in the formula. This is now because now the readers are aliens. Refer to Deut. 10:18, 14:29, 16:11, 16:14, 24:19-21, 26:12-13, and 27:19. In fact this portion seems to be based on Deut. 10:18.

⁶³ Note also in Deut. 10:18 that God relates the treatment of the widow to His own impartiality, something to be discussed in the next verse.

⁶⁴ This word for "unstained" appears in 1 Peter 1:19. It basically means to stay away from unholy things. It is also a *hapax* in James.

⁶⁵ Note that the world does not value widows and orphans. The most important thing to note with widows and orphans that they do not return a profit, nor some honor, as they have no one to impress. Thus, this requires *hesed*, or sacrificial mercy from Christ.

love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Mat 5:44-48)