

*Making Life Count* Series

*A Bible Study Book on the Epistle of James*  
*April & June 2013*

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*James*  
*"Faith That*  
*Makes A*  
*Difference"*

*Growing to a Deeper Level of Spiritual Maturity,  
and a Higher Quality of Christian Character.*

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***Christ E Free Church Pulpit Series***  
***-- June 2013 --***



*Jesus Christ*  
*Our Highest Calling,*  
*Our Greatest Purpose,*  
*Our Soul's Source and Joy*  
*And Our All-Consuming Passion.*



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*In the writings of James, the church is being called to growing a deeper level of spiritual maturity, while evidencing a higher quality of Christ-like character.*

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# ***“The Dangerous Deception of a False Faith: What is God Looking For”***

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TEXT: James 1:17-18

June 9, 2013

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Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. -James 1:17 ESV

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We know from both the truth of Scripture as well as from experience, that God does not change. Yet from the same sources we know equally well, that He has all power to change even the most stubborn and depraved of hearts.

-anonymous

**Review:** James has just introduced several Dangerous Deceptions. Last week we looked at the Dangerous Deception of Sin: Its Progression and Its Penalty. We saw how misunderstanding the character of God, can cause us to miss altogether the standard of God. We learned that the holy and righteous character of God, will direct us through the holy and righteous Word of God, and will faithfully lead us in personal holiness along God’s path of righteousness.

## INTRODUCTION

James takes us through a series of Dangerous Deceptions, for which he warns us and offers Biblically-focused, truth-filled, life-altering correction to address those deceptions. Today's focus is false faith and the true religion that God is looking for.

**Study It** - *What am I to learn as a disciple of Jesus Christ?*

Religion was one time known as pertaining to lifestyle. Today religion is more or less viewed as a system of “belief” –that may or may not affect life. “That person is ‘religious’ – could mean anything.

**Religion** – “a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.”

As believers in Jesus Christ, our religion is more than “religion”. We might like to refer to it as a relationship with God, through Jesus. And that relationship is comprised of beliefs and convictions that affect our lives for the present, as well as the future life to come. It's not about a label or a system, but is all about the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## THE DANGEROUS DECEPTION OF THE NATURE OF GOD

What we believe about God matters. It is important in order to foster a “*Faith That Makes A Difference*”.

**Jas 1:17-18** ESV (17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (18) Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

James reminds us that God is a good God, who delights in giving Good gifts. His good gifts, reflect his good nature.

There is reward for any and all who trust in Christ, and allow God to build in them a deep spiritual maturity, which will allow them to endure the trials of the human life and the tempting tricks of the evil one, himself.

## **The Unchanging Source of God**

Here, James gives us the truth concerning the nature of God and that the nature of our God is unchanging. Because God is good in His character, nature and essence, His purposes and His dealings with His creation are good. In verse 12, we dealt with God's character. He cannot be tempted, nor does He tempt any man... This was a proper understanding of the Character of God.

In. v17, James brings out the importance of understanding the nature of God in his essence and makeup. He is *unchanging*. Don't be deceived into believing that God is in the process of changing and evolving into who He is today and continues to do so. *This is heresy!*

**Process Theology** says basically, that God is in the process of changing. As man is evolving into what God is, God Himself, is evolving into something greater or different than we have historically believed Him to be.

Again, this is heresy! It completely denies what we know from Holy Scripture, to be the clear unchanging nature of God.

Consider the following passages.

**Mal 3:6** ESV "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

And the Son of God is also unchanging, because He is in His nature and very essence, true and unchanging *God*.

**Heb 13:8** ESV Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

This truth then, points us to God's unchanging nature, with His gift of unending life.

### The Unending Gift of Life

Having addressed the unchanging nature of God, we are now directed to God's unending gift of life. The people who know their God, know His Word. They know God is not a God who changes, but is in fact, a God who changes *us*.

**Jas 1:17-18** ESV (17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. **(18) Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.**

v.18 tells us He "brought us forth". This refers to the birthing process. In His word, He reveals to us, who He is, what He is like and how He deals with humanity. Its through His Word of Truth and faith, that we are birthed into His family<sup>[john1:12]</sup>. As a result, God's Word, and our faith, together with our acts of obedience, begin to form our faith and accomplish His good pleasure and perfect will.

Consider this contrast of Life vs. Death and James' previous reference.

**Jas 1:14-15** ESV But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (15) Then desire when it has conceived

gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown **brings forth death**.

Previously as we considered *The Dangerous Deception of Sin*, we discovered its progression toward the penalty of death. Sin brings forth, or gives birth to death. That is the nature of sin.

But he contrasts the nature of God in terms of bringing about good gifts and giving birth to life.

**James 1:18** Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth,

God's gift of life, is contrasted to the payment of death in v.15. This sin payment, together with the good gift of life is addressed by the Apostle Paul in Romans 6:23.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." --Rom 6:23 ESV

As our attention is directed toward God's good gift of the birth of life, we certainly think of other passages. Read John chapter 3 and consider Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, where he is told that "*he must be born again*"<sup>[Jn.3:7]</sup>.

Peter also speaks of the new birth.

**1Pet 1:3** ESV Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be **born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

**1Pet. 1:22-23** ESV Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, (23) since you have been **born again**, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

Or as James puts it in chapter 1:18, “He brought us forth by the *Word of Truth*”. For the Jew, the first fruits of the harvest represents the beginning of the harvest that has begun, yet looks forward to the remainder of the harvest which is yet to come. First fruit refers to the first of many in the harvest of the kingdom of God to come.

The Word, the grace and the mercy of God, work together, to bring a person to salvation through faith. The nature of God is unchanging. He deals with people through His Word. His expectation is that God’s word, together with our faith, will make a kingdom difference.

## **Obey It** - *Off the Page and Into My Life*

### **OFF THE PAGE AND INTO MY LIFE**

*The Dangerous Deception of a False Faith*, is one that believes wrongly, regarding the character, nature and purposes of God. What are we to believe about God and how are we to live? What does God expect of me and what is He looking for in my life?

James assures us God is looking for a Faith That Makes A Difference. He is looking for a growing depth of spiritual maturity, with a higher quality of Christian living. Our understanding of God, will affect how we live. Our knowledge of His holy word, will determine either our obedience or our disobedience.

If our faith is a false faith, what we believe or how we live will ultimately be inconsequential to us. But if our faith is a true and God pleasing faith, then it will be exhibited by God’s good gift of a life-changing life. This is birthed from a faith, firmly based on the word and person of Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, and our only Savior!

----- Thinking Things Through -----

- 1 ) What is your view of God? What is He like and how does He deal with humanity?
- 2) Where do you get this information? What is the basis of your understanding of who God is and what He is like?
- 3) Is your faith and obedience based on a first hand understanding of who God is, from your own first hand understanding of God's Word, the Bible?

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.”

-- James 1:16 ESV

----- Praying It Through -----

Awesome God, I know you from Scripture. I know you from experience. I trust You through the Truth and the new birth you provide for me.

Thank you for all your good and perfect gifts.

In Jesus' Name,

--Amen!



# ***“The Dangerous Deception of Anger and Righteousness: What God Requires of Us”***

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TEXT: James 1:19-21

June 13, 2013

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

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—James 1:19-21 ESV

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Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret.  
- Ambrose Bierce

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**Review:** James has just introduced several Dangerous Deceptions. Last week we looked at the The Dangerous Deception of A False Faith: What Is God Looking For? The Deception of the nature of God. We considered the Truth of the Unchanging Source of God, and the Truth of the Unending Gift of Life. We saw how misunderstanding the nature of God, can cause us to miss altogether the standard of God. God who is unchanging, has given

us His holy Word, which is unchanging. Likewise, the promise of the righteous life He is looking for is also unchanging.

## **INTRODUCTION**

How do you deal with anger?                      Count to 10?    Leave the room or remove yourself from the provoking environment?  
Bite your tongue?    Pray for grace?                      Demonstrate Self-control?

What we must do first, before we introduce any of our family remedies for anger, is to look to the Truth of God's Holy Word, to see what God says about it. Today we consider the Dangerous Deception of Anger and Righteousness. And in order to address these deceptions, James puts forth 2 truths to help get us back on course.

Twice in chapter 1, James makes reference to those who are *deceiving themselves*. Therefore, we need to be aware of the dangerous deception that we can allow ourselves to fall into.

How do we deceive ourselves on our Christian journey??

**Study It** - *What am I to learn as a disciple of Jesus Christ?*

## **THE TRUTH OF THE RIGHTEOUS STANDARDS OF GOD**

What Does God Require of Us? God does not simply bring life, He brings about life-changing life. In v.12 we considered the Holy character of God. In v.17 we considered the unchanging nature of God. Now in v.19 we consider the Righteous Standards or Expectations of God. Here we examine what it means to misunderstand the purposes of God.

### **The Standard of Righteous (v19-20)**

James attacks the dangerous deception of anger with the truth of the standard of righteousness.

**Jas 1:19-20** ESV *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;* (20) for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Now there was no danger in people being angry and thinking that their anger was somehow accomplishing or bringing to light the righteousness of God. But what was happening and does happen, is that our anger can bring about that which is the antithesis of what God wants to produce in our lives, which is Godly righteousness and personal holiness.

**Heb. 12:11** (MKJV) Now chastening [or discipline] for the present does not seem to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it.

We know that God's discipline in our lives, can seem to us as trials or tribulation. Yet, it is God's discipline that is intended to bring about the fruit of righteousness or the deeper spiritual maturity and a higher quality of Christian character of righteous living.

**Eph 5:9** MKJV (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

James himself picks this back up in chapter 3

**Jas 3:18** MKJV And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Making peace might be the opposite of what results from anger. Anger does not bring about or evidence the righteousness of God, but peace can. Or peace can be the seed, from which righteousness may grow. This is not so much a theological argument for the righteous life that God requires, which can come only through faith in Jesus<sup>[Rom.3:21]</sup>, but rather a practical warning that it is possible to miss living in a manner which pleases God.

[READ Rom. 3:10-18]

As we read this, it silences every excuse and renders void any alibi. Here we are directed to the character of God, as well as the nature and the standards of God.

James contrasts our anger and God's required righteousness. Anger is an emotion and righteousness is a lifestyle. Anger is a fatal flaw and can lead to sin and destruction. Righteousness is God's righteous standard and can lead to blessing from God and good toward our fellow man. Ultimately, anger occludes the peaceful fruit of righteousness which God desires to build into our lives.

## **The Challenge of The Standard**

Now James turns to address the truth of the challenge of the standard of righteousness. Righteousness is God's standard which we are to look to, or to measure ourselves by. That standard is not self, nor others. God's righteousness is our standard.

*The deception of the standard of ourselves*

**Pro 16:25 MKJV** There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end of it is the ways of death.

When our human nature is in control, we can reason away and excuse even the worst of our behavior, especially anger. "Why did you slap me?" "Well You made me." We can always come up with blame and personal justification for our actions, even our sinful actions. And when we hold ourselves up as the standard, - excuses for sin will always trump God's life-changing life and the increasing righteous quality of Christian character.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul reminds us of the danger of failing to keep God's standards always before us.

*The deception of the standard of others.*

**2Cor. 10:12** We dare not classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure one another by one another and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

Anger takes us in the opposite direction of God's righteous standard.

*Scripture has much to say about anger.*

**Pro 16:32** ESV Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

In other words, the person who is slow to anger or is mature enough to demonstrate self-control, he is stronger than a warrior who conquers a city. Boy we have that turned around. “*Might Makes Right!*” Muscle power, political might, ruthlessness authority is opposed to the righteous plan of God. Plowing people over as some build their own empire is not strength, from God’s perspective.

**Pro 14:17** ESV A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.

A quick temper is followed by foolish actions.

## Anger and sinful speech

I found it interesting to see the connection the Bible makes with anger and sinful speech. Anger is not equated with sin, but can certainly lead to and develop into sin.

**Eph 4:31** ESV Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

In Eph. 4:31, anger is the emotion, and slander is the sinful speech.

**2Co 12:20** ESV For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish--that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.

Here, quarreling and slander and gossip are the evil speakings, which originate from the emotion of anger and hostility.

## Controlling anger and Strength

**Prov. 15:1** ESV A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

A soft answer is Gods standard. A harsh word is human anger and sinful emotion.

**Pro 19:11** ESV Good sense makes one *slow to anger*, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

A person with *good sense* evidences discerning wisdom and righteous judgment from God.

**Eph 4:26** ESV *Be angry and do not sin*; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

We can be angry and still not sin. Jesus did that<sup>[Mat.21:12]</sup>.

**Gen 4:6-7** ESV The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? (7) If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

In the case of the sin of Cain, he followed the formula for sin, given in James 1:13-14. Desire or lust or anger in Cain's case, was allowed to grow, even at the verbal warning from God. That anger grew to hatred, which grew to murderous thoughts, which culminated in the very act of murder. If Cain had done well and not allowed anger to give birth to sin, he would have escaped the snare of sin.

Anger is not something we should pick up along the path of Righteousness. It does not please God. It does not measure up to the righteous standards of God. We are commanded to be slow to anger – that is becoming angry and provoking to anger.

## THE TRUTH OF THE LIFE CHANGE FROM GOD (V21A)

Dealing with sin, takes active steps of repentance and resolve.

**James 1:21** Therefore put away all *filthiness* and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

(comp.v18 – re: *giving us birth through the word of Truth*)

## Purity and Its Promised Reward (√21)

James speaks of our own purity and God's promise.

“Filthiness”, interestingly enough, is the same word James uses in 2:2

**Jas 2:2** ESV For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby (filthy) clothing also comes in,

This can be a reference to an immoral lifestyle or simply just inappropriate speech. Sometimes the way we joke around- with the words we use, or the cliché’s we use, can border on moral filthiness or that which is inappropriate.

Sometimes conversation between men and women in the office or work place can carry hidden immorality, in which things are stated in a manner which can be taken differently. A man might pretend to be quite innocent, but make a statement that may convey sexual undertones. – Not something that would hold up in court as sexual harassment, but certainly a statement that could be sort of a “testing the waters” to see what she might say or how she might respond. Our speech can be flirtatious or provocative or “filthiness” which is totally inappropriate for those who name Christ.

Young people often fall into this trap. Married adults often are lured into this kind of conversation, with an innocent beginning, yet ending in sinful sexual activities.

The promised reward is the effect of the powerful life changing Word of God which can bring about salvation of your soul. It can also bring about a changed earthly life which God is looking for and measures up to His righteous requirements.

### **Repentance and Salvation (v21a)**

“...*put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness...*”. Here we see the need for a personal step of action. *Repentance*. When winter is over, we put away our snow blower – take off the snow tires - we put away our warm hats and gloves – we put away our winter coats. Once winter is over, it is time to put things away as we prepare ourselves for a distinct change of climate.

God’s word urges us to repent, by putting away the old things of our old ways of living and prepare for a distinct change of climate

– a distinct change of spiritual climate. This is not just for some, nor is it just for the children. It's not just for the really wicked ones or just for the new believers. This life change from God is expected for each and every one of us.

The Holy Spirit urges us to “put away” all this kind of lifestyle and speech, and exhibit the life changing life, which God has given us through the new birth. In other words, our temporary, earthly life is expected to begin reflecting our eternal spiritual life, with greater depth of spiritual maturity and higher quality of Christian lifestyle. *This is not optional!*

### **Resolve and Obedience (v.21b)**

“*receive with meekness the implanted word...*”. This necessitates action steps towards change in our lives. It necessitates simple obedience. It's a choice we have. It's a choice we always have. It will determine whether or not we truly possess the life-changing life of the new birth from God that we claim to possess.

James is warning us that our willingness to change, and our resolve to obey, will be the dead giveaway, as to whether or not we truly belong to Christ.

“For the Word of God to bear its fruit in our lives, the “weeds of sin” must first be uprooted!. We cannot hope to benefit from our study of the Word if we continue to dwell on that which is spiritually filthy and to engage in wickedness. Could this be why many do not get much out of Bible Study?” –Mark Copeland

We know the Word **can** save the soul and **can** change the life. But not necessarily **will**. We must desire it and we must allow it.

**James 1:21b** ....and ***receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.***

v.21b) “meekness” is not a popular trait, even for Christians. *Meekness* is often associated with *weakness*. However, meekness is the quality of Christ and a sign of strong Christian character.

**Mat 5:5** ESV "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Being humble or meek meant to be humble and not self-centered. Meek has to do with a realistic, Biblical, appraisal of one's self.

**Mat 11:28-29** ESV Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

"Meek" = humble, gentle, mild,

**In Colossians chapter 3**, Paul writes to the Church is Colossae which seems to be in the process of being overrun with various old, sinful worldly practices. In the midst of their immorality and idolatry, in their growing struggle against anger and wrath, and with their characteristic slanderous and obscene speech – Paul says this ...

**Col.3:12** ESV Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

**In 1 Peter chapter 3**, - out of the midst of intense persecution, as the believers are struggling with revenge and treating others just as harshly as they themselves had been treated - Peter gives this instruction –

**1Pet. 3:15** ESV ...in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with meekness and respect,

Meekness is not weakness. Meekness is a character trait of Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Meekness is a trait that will associate us with Him and evidence that we are indeed His own.

**Its also Meekness that James brings back up in chapter 3**, when he returns to the issue of the tongue raging out of control – He addresses the dangerous destructive power of our words and how it can even destroy our own testimony. HE states that how we live

and how we speak and how we treat others will brand us and identify. In this context James intends to awaken the believers from their strife and selfishness by giving them this rebuke .....

**Jas 3:13** ESV Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

Meekness not only identifies us with Jesus Christ, it demonstrates a deeper level of wisdom and selflessness and Christian maturity.

### **Obey It** - *Off the page and Into My Life?*

Faith That Makes A Difference, Grows in its depth of spiritual maturity Increases in its quality of Christian Living. We close with 3 practical ways of taking personal inventory and honest evaluation before God. Dealing with anger, Putting away Filthiness and Nurturing Meekness.

#### ***Dealing with Anger***

**Eph 4:26-27** ESV Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, (27) and give no opportunity to the devil.

- **Do not allow** anger to fester, continue and go unaddressed.

Gen 4:6-7 ESV The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? (7) If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

If your emotions are not a battle, you are probably losing the battle. Anger can lead to bitterness, which can lead to hatred, which can lead to murder which is sin. It is an unchecked, unaddressed progression from emotion to sin.

- **Don't let the Sun go down on your anger.** Talk to the person you are angry with.

**Mat 18:15** ESV "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

This is an attempt to address anger in a timely manner. One pastor stated that he and his wife have never gone to bed angry.

However there has been a couple of times when they did not go to be for about 2 weeks : )

- **Pray and trust God for a way out.**

**1Cor. 10:13** ESV No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

- **Pray for strength**

**Heb 4:16** ESV Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- **Seek ways to love others**

**1Co 13:4-7** ESV Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant (5) or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; (6) it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. (7) Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- **Attempt to listen more, much more and speak less, much less**

**Jas 1:19-20** ESV Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;

- **Finally, Practice Forgiveness**

**Col 3:13** ESV bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

### ***Putting Away Filthiness***

- Admit you are weak and need God's help
- Write down what filthiness is.

- Think about how that has infiltrated into your life, your speech and your treatment of others
- Confess it as sin to God. Confess it to the person who has seen your actions or heard your speech.
- Repent from it – resolve to struggle against sin and fight the good fight of faith.
- Perhaps get someone else to help you by keep you accountable. Galatians 6 we are told to bear one another's burdens. This can be Christian accountability in helping, supporting and walking with another brother or sister in Christ, as we help them grow and advance along their journey with Jesus Christ.

### ***Nurturing meekness***

- Consider how Jesus viewed and treated others. Read through the gospels and look at his life and treatment of others. Look for ways to act and speak as He did.
- Look up the references to Meekness and see what it is associated with. Take note of the various sins associated with the lack of meekness or other positive character traits of those who are meek.
- Write down 3 steps you can take toward nurturing meekness. This is person, and creative steps you can take for your own personal development.

### **----- Thinking Things Through -----**

- 1 ) How do you respond when you get angry? Do you exhibit the righteousness of Christ-like character? Once you realize you are angry, how do you deal with it?
- 2) What about your filthiness or your old nature? Does your life and/or speech reflect the new you in Christ or do others see the same old you, but with contradicting claims of faith?
- 3) Would others describe you as “meek”? Are you proud of that or disturbed?

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.  
The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.  
--2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV).

-----Praying It Through-----

Dear God, I know you want to change me. I want to change but find it so very hard. My old self seems so strong. My own will seems to dominate every good intention I have to please you.

I desperately need your help.

In Jesus' Name,  
--Amen!



# **“The Dangerous Deception of Disobedience: *What Must I Do?*”**

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TEXT: James 1:22-24

June 23, 2013

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

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“The greatest deception men suffer is from their own opinions.”  
-Leonardo da Vinci

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In a court of law, there is a process of attempting to establish the truth. If you are charged with a crime, lawyers on both sides would make their arguments and present the evidence in hopes of establishing the truth, as to whether you are innocent or guilty.

James is acting somewhat like a judge. He is demanding evidence for the Christian life. This presents the question to each of us: If you or I were charged with being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict us?

## Study It - What am I to learn as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Christians have a saying, “If you talk the talk, then must walk the walk”. As Christians, we realize we are not perfect but are in the process of being changed by God and are growing into the people He wants us to be.

Some are deceived, thinking once they become a Christian, they are saved and going to heaven, so they can live as they like. Or perhaps they even come up with their own guidelines for what is OK for them, rather than what God’s word says.

God has very specific guidelines for all believers, all of which involve opportunities to love, help and serve. As James makes know the dangerous deceptions, he addresses them with truths.

### FAITH DOES NOT REQUIRE EVIDENCE

In this section, James addresses the dangerous deception that faith does not require works or Evidence (v22-25). The righteous life that God desires, begins with true saving faith and is evidenced through increasing levels of obedience to God’s holy Word.

**This is the bottom line.** Is there evidence in my life, that I am a true Christian? Am I thinking and speaking differently? Am I acting and living differently? Am I viewing and treating others differently? Have my heart and my desires been changed?

James now shares some truths which are intended to address the dangerous deceptions of disobedience.

#### A Disobedient Life

In counteracting the deceptions, he offers the *truth* of the deception of a disobedient life.

**Jas 1:22-23 ESV** (22) But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, **deceiving yourselves.** (23) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.

A “doer” of the Word is someone who is obedient to God. This person’s life has evidence of being a true Christian. The Truth is, we can be deceived regarding our own Christian living and not even realize it. In fact we can be guilty of deceiving ourselves.

**Jer 17:9** ESV The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can understand it?

We have to read and/or hear God’s word in order to obey it.

This can come from personal Bible reading at home and it can take place through our Bible Study and Prayer group or something like that.

All our meetings at our church, from our children’s meetings to our adult meetings are based on the Word of God. It is through the word of God that faith is formed<sup>[Rom.10:17]</sup>. This is of utmost importance.

### ***The deception of hearing only***

The disobedient life, is one in which the responsibility of personal growth is solely in God’s hands. The obedient life is one where the Christian is aware of the need to exhibit evidence of the Christian life. He or she also is taking active steps, though sometimes uncomfortable and sacrificial, to allow God to change their lives.

Hearing and Doing involves the difference between memorizing and quoting Scripture and *living* Scripture. This is where our walk matches our talk and our works or deeds or lifestyle demonstrates our faith. Hearing a sermon is not enough, no matter how moving it may be. Reading the Bible is not enough, no matter what nuggets of truth you may discover. Obedience to God is what it’s all about as a demonstration to God of our love and devotion to Him<sup>[Jn.14:15]</sup>.

If all the Christian life was about, was letting go, doing our own thing and letting God do His thing, then many Christians would be on the right track. However when we look at Scripture, there are so many commands that clearly instruct us on the need to take steps of action. These are commands of imperative instruction, to which God expects the readers to obey.

There are certain times when faced with fear, we have to trust God, let go of what we cannot control and allow God to do His thing. There are other times when once we know what God expects of us, that we step out in faith and obey, carrying out some good work. True saving faith demands a changed life, with an ever increasing level of good works.

**Eph. 2:8-10** ESV For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

**Tit. 2:14** ESV [Jesus] gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Scripture demands obedience. Paul instructs young Timothy to fight the good fight (1Tim.6:12). Near the end of His life, Paul states that He has fought the good fight (2Tim. 4:7). He states that His spiritual journey has been agonizing. This pertains to his concern for other believers, the persecution he has experienced and the kingdom work he has accomplished. These have been steps of obedience to God, even though they have been often unpleasant and on occasion, life threatening.

**1Cor. 15:58** ESV Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

### *The dangers of self-deception*

**Jas 1:22-23** *ESV (22) But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (23) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.*

Self-deception happens when we fail to view ourselves as Gods views us. This happens when we consider ourselves better than we

are. We get sidetracked when personal pride or rebellion rules the human heart. We are deceived when our desires direct our lives and govern our decisions.

When we do not know the Bible or when we are not “doers” of the Word, it is easy to wear labels. When this happens, we begin to feel confident or dependent upon the organization we belong to or the label we wear. These are deceptions. The dangers of self-deception is, is that it’s easy to talk the talk but not walk the walk.

### *The dangers of self-admiration*

**Jas 1:22-24** ESV (22) But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. **(23) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.** (24) For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

A young man finally gets the courage to ask out a young lady. He picks her up at home, and notices she has a significant “boogie” lodged in one nostril. He can’t believe she spent time in front of the mirror getting ready for the date and missed that. He can’t get that out of his mind.

As they arrive at the restaurant, they are met by the waitress and seated. As they pass through the restaurant on their way to their seat, people are looking and staring at the woman. They sit down and the man is clearly uncomfortable, not knowing what to say, or if he should say anything. During the meal he notices that his gag reflex is especially sensitive.

The young lady finally excuses herself to go to the ladies room. The man thinks, “finally, she’ll surely look in the mirror and address the big “boogie”. Perhaps now, he’ll at least be able to enjoy desert. However when the lady returns, he realizes she has brushed her hair, put on another coat of lipstick and sprayed on some more perfume, but the “boogie” is still there. And he thinks to himself, “*What good is the mirror!*”

James likens the Word of God to a mirror that a person looks into, but fails to address the problems that the mirror reveals. Now

imagine the same person, not with a mirror, but a Bible. She is seen by others carrying it everywhere. She is periodically seen spending time gazing into it, reading it, and yet not allowing it to bring conviction necessary for personal life change to take place. This person is deceiving herself. She focuses on the promises that remind her, “I’m blessed”. She loves reading the encouraging words which remind her, “I’m a child of God.” In her heart she thinks, “What wonderful promises for me.” “What a great future I have”, all the while ignoring the passages of conviction on areas of needed life change.

The question is eventually brought before us: What good is the Bible to that person? This is the dangerous deception that faith does not require obedience of life change.

Now imagine a person – anyone of us here today - looking deeply into the mirror of God’s Holy Word, not for self-admiration, but with the purpose of seeking God’s life changing power for your life. Seeking to be more purified in word and deed than ever before. Longing to grow to a deeper level of spiritual maturity, with a higher quality of Christian character.

**Jas 1:25** ESV But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

The person who not only looks, but gazes or looks continuously and obeys continuously. Then they read, “*put away all filthiness*”, and respond, “*wow, that is for me*”. They read, “*love your neighbor as yourself*”, and they respond by thinking, “*that is God speaking directly to me.*” They read, “*pray for those who persecute you*”, and respond by thinking, “*God’s Word is convicting me.*”

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

In 1:12, the blessing is in persevering in trials and remaining steadfast.

In 1:25, the blessing is in persevering in obedience, as a sign of a truly changed life.

*Faith That Makes a Difference* says I have seen myself as God sees me. I know the areas in my life which are in need of change. I choose to take steps and trust God to help me become more obedient and more like Christ.

### **Obey It** - *Off the page and Into My Life*

Faith That Makes A Difference, that is Growing in its depth of spiritual maturity and increasing in its quality of Christian Living - that is the Faith that God is looking for. We are expected to be “doers” of the word, not hearers only.

How do you view God’s Word? Applying to others but not me? How long has it been since I was really convicted by God’s word, regarding some area of sin in my life?

The question for each of us today is this: (1) What do I need to do, in order to become more obedient and less self-appreciating? (2) What is the motivation for obedience? Is it my love for God? If

so, what evidence is there of my obedience or my love for God? Would my love and good deeds, be enough to convict me in a court of law of being a Christian?

This is not a set of rules to obey, but are some evidences of a compassionate heart to help and ministry to others in hardships. This reflects a heart that loves God and loves others and cannot remain distant or disconnected. This is what Serve Saegertown Projects were all about.

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

**Jas 2:5** ESV Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he ***has promised to those who love him?***

How much we love God, will affect how we treat and how we help others, and will be evidence of the true Christian life and character.

### ----- Thinking Things Through -----

- 1) What does the illustration of the mirror refer to? What does that say to us?
- 2) What is the perfect law of liberty? Why is it perfect? How does it provide liberty?
- 3) What is the blessing in this passage and why?

“But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.” –James1:25

### -----Praying It Through-----

Holy Father, I want the blessing that comes from loving and obeying your Holy Word. Cause my heart to desire that more than other attractions.

In Jesus' Name,  
--Amen!



# **“The Dangerous Deception of Our Speech: *How Must I Speak?*”**

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TEXT: James 1:27

June 30, 2013

Theme: The Tongue, the Heart and the Lifestyle.

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James 1:26-27 ESV If anyone thinks he is religious and  
James 1:26-27 ESV If anyone thinks he is religious and  
bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's  
does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this  
worthless. (27) Religion that is pure and undefiled  
person's religion is worthiness. (27) Religion that is pure  
the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their  
and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit  
and to keep oneself unstained from the world.  
orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep  
oneself unstained from the world

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The most terrifying words in the English language are:

*'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'*

**--Ronald Reagan**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

How would you feel if you lived in a house that was full of windows, with no curtains, shades or blinds? Anybody at any time could walk by and look in a see anything and everything you were doing?

How would you feel if there was a window that allowed people to look straight into your heart, so that the contents of your heart and mind - all your thoughts and all your feelings were fully revealed? How would you like that?

There is such a window and it is our speech. The words we speak and *how* we speak can reveal the contents of a person's heart – our attitudes, thoughts, opinions, feelings *AND* our character.

Today we learn about the Heart and the Tongue, the source and symptom of many problems.

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**"Words", by Hawk Nelson**

They've made me feel like a prisoner

They've made me feel set free

They've made me feel like a criminal, Made me feel like a king

They've lifted my heart, To places I'd never been  
And they've dragged me down, Back to where I began

Words can build you up, Words can break you down  
Start a fire in your heart or, Put it out

Let my words be life, Let my words be truth  
I don't wanna say a word, Unless it points the world  
back to You

You can heal the heartache, Speak over the fear  
God, Your voice is the only thing, We need to hear

Let the words I say, Be the sound of Your grace  
I don't wanna say a word, Unless it points the world  
back to You

I wanna speak Your love, Not just another noise  
Oh, I wanna be Your light, I wanna be Your voice

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**STUDY IT** – *As a disciple of Jesus Christ, what am I to learn?*

The heart and the tongue, the source and symptom of many problems or the evidence of a ***Faith That Makes A Difference.***

*James reveals....*

## **THE DIFFERENCE TRUTH CAN MAKE**

After having looked at ourselves in the mirror of God's Holy Word, we now see a false and worthless or a pure and faultless religion.

**Jas 1:25-26** ESV But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (26) If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

The word religious can be our word for “piety” or a holy life or religious practices. A true *Doer of the Word*, is specifically described as one who evidences personal piety and specifically control of their tongue.

Imagine if someone were able to record every word you uttered in a given day, and then play it back to you. Would you be concerned about it being broadcast to the public?

Just last Sunday evening, Nik Walenda, of the famous Flying Walenda family, walked across the Grand Canyon on a cable. He was fitted with a microphone so you could hear everything he was saying. Along the way, you could hear him say, “Thank you Jesus!” At one point you could hear the wind blowing and you could sense Nik Walenda's concern as he prayed, “Jesus please calm the winds.” “I praise you Jesus”.

If it were me, I don't think I'd want myself to be ‘miked’ like that. James gives us a symptom of a faulty religion (v.26)

### ***The Truth of My Heart***

The Truth of the content of my heart is revealed in my speech. The content of the heart is revealed through the words we speak. Kindness, sarcasm, mockery, encouragement, pride, criticism, bragging, building others up, gossip and slander, inappropriate

joking, tearing others down, etc. – all are revealed through our words. The words we speak opens a window, revealing the very contents of your heart and mind.

**Q:** *What do you think your speech communicates about you?*

As we look into the mirror of God's Holy Word, we will read and hear and be convicted regarding our speech.

**Pro 12:18** ESV There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

**Pro 18:21** ESV Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.

Our words can speak life or death. With words we can build up with encouragement or tear down in destruction.

“...If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart...” The imagery used here is that of bridling a horse. The bridle controls the entire animal. Turns to the left or the right or rein it in to slow it down or stop.

The bit is not a large implement, but it does have a large effect on controlling a horse. Likewise, our speech may not seem to be a big deal to some, but it can have a big impact upon others.

Our speech can reflect the validity or the worthlessness of our “religion”. The mirror or the Word of God, or the Perfect law of freedom, reveals to honest readers the course of action needed to be taken, in order to be free of sinful living and self-deception.

Our words can destroy our testimony for Christ or enhance our testimony. Our speech can, either prove us hypocrites or genuine disciples of our Lord Jesus.

**Col 4:6** ESV Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Bridling the tongue, refers to our ability and willingness to control our words. The tongue is the horse. The bridle is the means of controlling the horse. The rider is the willpower to use the bridle

which will control the horse. For every person, willpower is the ultimate villain.

There is something within our fallen, broken, sinful, human nature that enjoys misusing our words. It is our ability to express what we feel or think. Yet, this is the symptom of a far deeper and far more serious problem. When we can't control our words, it is a symptom of a heart problem.

Turn to Luke 6:43-45

**Luk 6:45** ESV The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for **out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.**

*"...out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks..."*

The heart is the source. Our speech is the symptom. Treasured up in the heart – desires, lusts, attitudes, - all come out of the heart – specifically, a sinful heart. The Heart is like a teapot and our mouth is like the teapot's spout. As the abundance of the teapot pours out the spout, so the abundance of the heart pours out the mouth. This is important, because our speech can confirm or negate or pollute all that we do as Christians.

The sinful heart is what fuels the sinful speech. Our speech, therefore reveals the content of the heart. Ultimately, our speech is not the main issue, but the state of the heart and its content.

### ***The Overflow of the Heart***

A few examples of how the overflow of the heart is revealed through our words.

**1) Out of a heart full of Pride**, overflows the sinful speech of bragging, arrogance, exaggeration, even dominating conversations.

**Psa 12:3-4** ESV May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, (4) those who say, "With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?"

**2) Out of a heart full of deception**, overflows the sinful speech of lying of all kinds

**Pro 6:16-19** ESV There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: (17) haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, (18) a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, (19) a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

We certainly know Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), and God said that he hates a lying tongue (Pro. 6:17). All liars will have their part in the lake of fire, according to Revelation 21:8.

**3) Out of a heart full of anger and hatred**, overflows the speech of gossip, slander, backbiting, talking behind others' backs.

**Gen 37:3-4** ESV Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. (4) But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

**Pro 25:18** ESV A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.

So a lying tongue is a misuse of a deadly weapon. It can be used to harm others near at hand like a war club- this is point blank range. Words can also be deadly a short distance away. We can our words like a sword use a sword to whittle down at arm's length. Then there is a sharp arrow. We can even speak damage at long distances, over the phone, by mail, email or texting.

Or our words can reach around the world, brining strength, encouragement and blessing to others, either locally or long distance.

**Mar 7:21-23** ESV For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, (22) coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. (23) All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Or a changed heart can express appreciation, joy, healing and loving kindness toward others.

**4) Out of a heart full of discontent**, overflows the speech of complaining, and grumbling

**Exo 16:8** ESV And Moses said, "When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him--what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD."

Or out of a changed heart can flow words of peace which can stabilize the attitudes of others and reveal a deep faith in God that truly makes a difference.

**5) Out of a heart full of unconcern**, overflows the sinful silence of no speech at all – when something should be said.

**Pro 31:8-9** ESV Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. (9) Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

A silent tongue is also a sinful tongue because we have been commanded to speak up and witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. In Acts 1:8, Jesus said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." We, as Christians, have an obligation to tell others about the saving grace of Jesus. To be silent about Christ is to sin against Christ. Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38) [BibleBelievers.com]

***An Apple will always be an apple.***

**Luk 6:43-44** ESV (43) "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, (44) for each tree is known

by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush..

An Apple is an apple because it grows from an apple tree. An apple will always be an apple. No matter how long it grunts - or how hard it may try, it cannot change into an orange.

The apple is an apple, because of the tree it grew from. What is in our heart is the same way. We can mask it, we can temporarily conceal it or act like we aren't an apple, but down inside we are an apple, unless something outside of ourselves, changes us.

We simply are what we are by nature. The nature of what we are, fills the heart. And what fills the heart, will come out the mouth. The heart is the source. Our words are the symptoms.

## THE TRUTH OF TRUE RELIGION

James goes on to reveal the Truth of true religion and a faith that God is looking for.

Jas 1:16 ESV Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.

Jas 1:22 ESV But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

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

**Q:** So what is true religion and how will we know it when we see it?

### ***True Religion and the heart***

The identifying mark of a pure and faultless religion is one which demonstrates care and compassion toward others. The identifying factor or the Key word is compassion. Compassion is genuine concern and interest for the well-being of others.

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

\* *Pure Religion is A Faith That Makes A Difference* (v27)

Affliction means *to be squeezed or crushed by the trials and overwhelming hardships of life*. A concerned and compassionate heart for those afflicted and crushed. Compassion is an interested and willing involvement in helping those who are overwhelmed with life, and in need of help.

I believe our church family receives an “A”, in demonstrating that kind of faith and compassion. This is such a key point, that Jesus put it this way, when He was referring to His promised return?

**Mat 25:34-40** ESV Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, (36) I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' (37) Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (38) And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? (39) And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' (40) And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Compassion expressed to the *least*, evidences genuine love for the *Greatest* – that is Jesus. A true heart of compassion demonstrates by acts of compassion, not to be noticed by others or to try to work itself into the kingdom of God. But a heart of compassion demonstrates it, because that is what it is filled with.

True religion or true *Faith That Makes A Difference*, is one from which genuine heart-felt compassion flows, because we love Him. If we love Him, we will love others.

True religion with true faith will be characterized by a righteous upset over a compassionate concern and action toward others. James does not present an exhaustive list of things to do in order to prove your faith is genuine. But what he does is present 2 important categories.

(1) Compassion toward others and (2) Personal Purity.

Orphans and widows are often those who need help, but cannot adequately help themselves. They need help. For these, the church is especially needed to be proactive in coming along side them, to support, encourage, and help as they may need.

### ***True religion and lifestyle***

The 2<sup>nd</sup> identifying mark of a pure and faultless religion is to be kept unstained by the world. The Identifying factor or the Key concept here is **Personal Purity**.

“Unstained by the world” means one who may live *in* the world, but does not live *like* the world. This person does not allow the lust and attractions of ungodly desires and lifestyle to take over her or his life.

I used to work at a Service Station back when gas stations provided “service”. There was a fellow by the name of Leonard. He had long curly blonde hair and always wore a white, tank-top t-shirt. His job was changing oil in cars. The interesting thing about Leonard, was that he always went left work, just a clean and spotless as he arrived. Somehow, he always managed to keep that clean white shirt, spotless.

That is how we are to live as Christians. We may be around a lot of moral dirt, but we are to remain unstained and unattracted by the dirt around us.

The focus of the “world” is self-focused pursuits, projects of little or no eternal kingdom value, worthless endeavors or spending time on things or luxuries one could do without.

**1Jn 2:15-16** ESV Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, ***the love of the Father is not in him.***  
(16) For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world.

**1Jn 3:17-18** ESV (17) But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, ***how does***

**God's love abide in him?** (18) Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

That is what James is talking about. Not a theological debate, but a practical display of a living faith.

## **OBEY IT - OFF THE PAGE AND INTO MY LIFE**

**Question #1:** How do we know that our religion is “true” or that our faith is *A Faith That Makes A Difference*?

And, how can we be sure our living is pure and pleasing to God?

1) By Being Doers of the Word and not hearers only. This means obedience to God’s Holy Word.

2) By our purposeful control of our words. That evidences a genuine change of the heart.

3) By our genuine and interested heart of compassion for the welfare of others. That indicates that self is no longer first, but now, others are more important than I am.

4) By a life that is increasingly being freed from the attractions of the world and is now investing in kingdom focused pursuits. This will be evidenced, not by sinless perfection, but by a day to day fighting against sin and the attractions of this world upon our hearts.

For true faith to be seen, there must be a willingness to put into practice steps of obedience to please God and show myself to be a growing, maturing Christian. How long has it been since I was really convicted by God’s word, regarding some area of sin in my life?

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

Again, this is not a set of rules to obey, but are some evidences of a true Christ-like heart. This reflects a heart that loves God and

loves others and cannot remain distant or disconnected. *This is what a genuine Christian faith is all about.*

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

**Jas 2:5** ESV Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he ***has promised to those who love him?***

**Question #2:** Am I satisfied with my heart, my speech and my lifestyle?

How much we love God, will affect how we treat and how we help others.

**Psa 139:23-24** ESV Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

**Psa 51:7-12** ESV Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (8) Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. (9) Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. (10) Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. (11) Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. (12) Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

*Then...*

*...changed speech will follow,*

*...a compassionate heart will follow,*

*...and a transformed lifestyle will follow.*

----- Thinking Things Through -----

- 1) What does James present as false religion? Why?
- 2) What specifically is described as true religion? Why?
- 3) Why do you think the word for “religion” is used?

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

----- Praying It Through -----

Lord, keep my clean and unstained from the world. Please keep my pure and help me to stay on the path of righteousness for your name sake.

In Jesus' Name,

--Amen!



# **Sin and Prejudice:** *Equality of Humanity?*

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TEXT: James 2:1-9

July 7, 2013

Theme: Partiality, Prejudice, Pride and the love of God toward others.

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“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold  
the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Lord of glory.” - James 2:1

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One man does another a favor so that he will return the favor.  
How admirable is that?  
- anonymous

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## **INTRODUCTION**

James begins with the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

*“...Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory...”* (v1)

What we claim to believe, How we speak, What we do, how we live, and how we treat others, will evidence to the observing world,

Who we are, Who we belong to, who we align ourselves with and who it is we represent. James says, that is our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory.

Remember James 1:1. Jesus is not only the Savior of men, He is also the example and standard of how men are to live.

James refers to the Lord Jesus twice, but refers to the Lord, about 15 times in his letter. When he refers to the Lord, it seems to be a generic reference to God, or perhaps specifically God the Father.

But when He speaks specifically of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, he is reminding us of Jesus, God's Son, but also God the Father's representative and example of what we are to be doing and how we are to be living.

Jesus came to show us God's word in the flesh and to be a visual, historical example of how to live the Christian life.

**STUDY IT** – *As a disciple of Jesus Christ, what am I to learn?*

## THE EQUALITY OF HUMANITY

Equality – all are created equal. We have equal value, worth, and love. Not everyone is exactly the same as each are unique individuals, yet there is a definite equality among all people.

**Jas 2:1-4ESV** (1) My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. (2) For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ESV (3) and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," (4) have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

### Partiality

James begins to address the sin of partiality. In verse 1, he urges the believers to refrain from showing favoritism. We are to show no partiality in how we view others. Not everyone may think about this, but possibly many are guilty of it.

*...Holding faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory...*

### **Identifying the Sin**

This is not referring to best friends or those whom we appreciate at different levels. This is referring to discrimination, special attention, preferential treatment, favoritism, partiality, prejudice, racism or being *respector of persons*.

This is what was taking place between Jacob and his son Joseph. He loved Joseph more than his other sons.<sup>[Gen.37:4]</sup> As a result of this partiality, jealousy was fostered and some other pretty significant family problems.

**Joh 7:24** ESV Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

**1Sa 16:7** ESV But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

Too often, we pay attention to appearances, abilities, finances, or looks. But God looks on the heart. He knows the evil that lurks in the hearts of men."

**Act 10:34** ESV So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,

### **Categorizing the sin**

"*For if*"... or "*Suppose*" – example or illustration. This may or may not have been a hypothetical situation. James briefly alludes to this in ch.1:9-11. He addresses it more in depth here in 2:2-7. He will return to this very topic in Chapter 5 with even greater severity.

Rich and poor or shabby. This is defined as filthy - cp.1:21, "filthiness")

= Inappropriate, unpleasant, repulsive...

- 1) economic            2) ethnic, racial, color            3) Gender
- 4) religious            5) Position or power            6) Patriotism or Nationalism.

James begins illustrating what was going on in their own particular situation, that is the issue of the rich and the poor. The rich were being favored, while the poor are being discriminated against.

**Q:** Is it possible to turn it around to favor the poor and discriminate against the rich? Certainly. Some perceive all wealthy people, as evil or villains.

## **The Value of Equality**

**Jas 2:3-4** ESV (3) and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," (4) have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

This seems to be taking place within the church.

*He addresses*

### **“special attention”**

Special attention focuses on outer appearances. This is clearly a reference to a godless and sinful view of others.

Who do you view as being of greater value?

Who do you view as being of lesser value?

Do you judge others by what they drive? The house they live in? Their skills or talents? By their popularity or celebrity status?

### **“evil judgments”**

Treating people with partiality, may reflect an inner problem of covetousness or pride. These evil judgments are in the context of our inner attitudes of a sinful heart. It reflects inappropriate motives for a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.(v1). It reflects judgment without discernment, and criticism without Christ-like purpose. When that happens, we disregard the equality of every human being.

## THE VALUE OF HUMANITY

\*There is equality of human value in every person.

Gen. 1:26-27 tells us that we are created in the image of God.

**Gen 1:26-27** ESV Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

**Jas 3:9** ESV With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.

If you cured cancer or drive a garbage truck, you could never become more valuable to God than you presently are. You have value because God created you with value in His image.

## A Warning to the Christians

**Jas 2:5-7** ESV (5) Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?

(6a) But you have dishonored the poor man...

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

“brothers” – Christians! Listen – look at yourselves, do you realize what you’re doing? How you are treating one another? They were devaluing some and exalting others. Take Heed!

*the “poor in this world”*

Where would they have learned this? What would it mean?

**Mat 5:3** ESV "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

These are the “Poor in Spirit”(2:5) which are often the poor

financially. These are those of our mission field, whom God has called us to reach. These *poor* may be poor in finances, but they may also be rich in faith. Turn away your face from this and you turn away from God's calling and blessing.

Someone may think, "We can't afford to reach out to the poor." "We can't afford the potential cost of helping, serving, discipling them." Yet we cannot afford *not* to. To turn away from anyone who God is calling us to reach for his name, is paramount to turning our back on God Himself and we can never afford to be guilty of that.

*"...those who love Him..."* (cp.1:12)

*"dishonoring" others*

They were dishonoring the poor man who were part of their mission field.

Don't turn away, but embrace it and trust God for a miracle – that is what it's all about anyway. They were dishonoring those who were also in God's image. These were brothers and sisters in Christ and part of their spiritual family. What a grievous testimony against the church.

In God's kingdom, no one was worth~~less~~ than another. No one is worth more than another.

## **Condemnation of the Wicked**

<p><b>Jas 2:5-7</b> ESV (6b) ...Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? (7) Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?</p>
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They were guilty of disrespecting and defying God. They were allowing fear to rule over faith, for favoritism to rule over Christian love.

We may be tempted to think, "we need more financially sound people in our church to help pay our bills." In reality, what we need is to be able to obey and trust God for what we need, in order to accomplish what He is calling us to do.

Why were they allowing this to happen? Look at what you are doing. This is not the Lord's work of faith, but the world's way of fear.

How is it possible that they were blaspheming the honorable name of the Lord Himself?

*“Blaspheme: A deliberate, direct, defiance of the person, character and word of our Holy God.”* “slandering or blaspheming”. Slandering one another is presented at the same level of blaspheming God Himself.

## **CONVICTED BY THE LAW**

Here is the core and content of partiality or discrimination.

### **Fulfilling the Law**

Chapter 1 refers to the perfect law or the law of freedom.

**James 2:8-9** **(8) If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.** (9) But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

### *The Royal Law*

Obedience to the Law in James is not obedience to the 10 commandments but of the Royal Law of love. Royal Law is God's law of Love. “Love your neighbor as yourself.” This is all the commandments of God rolled into or fulfilled in one. If we truly love God (Jms 1:12; 2:5) then we will surely love others (Jms 1:26-27).

### *Loving Others*

Royal Law is law of Love - “*love your neighbor*”

Search for all the references to this command. Jesus brings us back to the reality of partiality....

## **The Sin of Partiality**

It is important to understand, that this kind discrimination and

treatment of the poor and needy is, in no uncertain terms, *sin against God*.

**James 2:8-9** (8) If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. **(9) But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.**

This conviction by the "law" is being convicted by the Royal Law of lovingly treating all people equally and valuing them equally before God.

## **Obey It** - Off the Page and into my life

### **1) Sin of partiality** (v9a)

They have not sinned by transgressing the 10 commandments, but against God's law of love, in which is the fulfillment of all the law and the prophets. <sup>[Mat.22:40]</sup>

### **2) Christians convicted as sinners** (v9)

**James 2:8-9** (8) If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. **(9) But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.**

These are the beloved brothers from v5. These are being convicted by God's law as transgressors.

Where do you stand today? Does God law of love convict you as a transgressor or a sinner?

Are you fulfilling the Royal Law of God and loving others and viewing others without partiality and without judgmental discrimination?

Don't show favoritism in our relationships, or in our attitudes, or in ministry outreach.

----- Thinking Things Through -----

- 1) How do some people show favoritism? How does it happen in church?
- 2) Why is favoritism a sin?
- 3) What does the Royal Law address this?
- 4) How should we evaluate the value of each person? (Gen.1)

“If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture,  
"You shall love your neighbor as yourself,"  
you are doing well.” --James 2:8 ESV

----- Praying It Through -----

Lord, thank you that You do not show favoritism. Thank you for reaching down to me. Bless me to bless others by seeing them for who You created them to be and by showing no hesitation in extending my hand to others.

In Jesus' Name,  
--Amen!



# **“Law and Guilt:** *The Good, the Bad and the Merciful?”*

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TEXT: James 2:8-14

July 14, 2013

Theme: = Good works outweighing sins.

James  
“Faith That  
Makes A

{

}

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Prejudice is a great time saver. You can form opinions  
without having to get the facts.  
—E. B. White

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## **INTRODUCTION**

How many good works are needed in order to outweigh your sins?

Faith that cannot be seen is to be exhibited by love that cannot be hidden. These acts of love do not provide a balance for our evil works, but are intended to accompany of true Christian faith and demonstrate that we are indeed, followers of Jesus.

Matthew chapter 18 tells us of the “Unmerciful Servant” who, when confronted by his master to whom he owed more than he could ever pay, appealed to his master’s kind hearted nature and

pled for mercy. The master did have mercy on his servant and forgave him his debt.

At which point the servant, then went out and upon meeting another man who owed him money, demanded payment. When this man confessed his inability to pay what he owed, and pled for mercy – the first servant showed no mercy, but in fact had the man thrown into prison.

**Study It** - *As a disciple of Christ, what am I to learn?*

Justice is receiving that which is deserved. Mercy is receiving what is undeserved and unearned. When it comes to others, we want to dispense justice. When it comes to ourselves, we prefer mercy.

**Jas 2:1** ESV My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

In this passage, James contrasts the traditional OT Law of God (10 commandments, etc) with the NT fulfillment of the Law of God in Christ Jesus. All the Law of God is fulfilled in the love we have for God and for others.

In the OT traditional law, we have the letter of the law which is the intent and standard of God for all humanity. In the NT law of Love, we have the spirit of the Law which is the intent and standard of God for all humanity.

James has already addressed our faith and loving God. This is our vertical relationship.

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

**Jas 2:5** ESV Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?

Now he addresses our faith and loving others. Those are our horizontal relationships.

*“FAITH THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE” has at it’s core...*

## **THE ROYAL LAW OF LOVE**

The Law of Love is the law of God written on the heart of man.  
This is the law of the heart or conscience, rather than that of stone.

**James 2:8-13** ESV If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. (9) But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors

Scripture tells us that in loving God, and our neighbor, all the law of God is fulfilled.<sup>[Mat.22:40]</sup> God has promised that one day, He will write His own law upon the hearts of men.

**Jer 31:33** ESV For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

*The Royal Law of God is the...*

## **Law of the Heart and Conscience**

God holds us to the standard of His law, even His law of Love. In the story of the Good Samaritan<sup>[Luk.10:27]</sup>, the question is asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?”. Jesus did not so much identify who our specific neighbor *was*, as He identified what it means to *be* a good neighbor to others or to be “neighborly”.

Matt 22:37-39 commands us to love God which is the first and greatest commandment. Then we are to love our neighbor, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment.

Then there is the Golden Commandment – Treat others as you would want to be treated. This addresses the conscience, or the heart. It reminds us that the Royal Law of Love is most easily kept, when we place ourselves as recipients of our own treatment to others.

*The Royal Law of God is the...*

## **Law of Compassion and helping**

To show partiality, is to obey partially. To obey partially, is to disobey completely.

**Joh 13:34-35** ESV A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. (35) By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

This NEW commandment, is not new, as in addition to, but new with the idea of "here is an easy summary of it".

## THE WHOLE LAW OF JUDGMENT

God expects us to keep the whole law.

**James 2:10-11** ESV (10) For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. (11) For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

### The power of the law

The law of God can convict us and hold us accountable.

We tend to think of God's law as "the Big 10" or the 10 commandments. If we cannot identify one of those we have broken, we consider ourselves in pretty safe territory. Yet we see here that if we have not loved, or shown compassion or consideration for others, with the demonstration of kindness, and mercy, then we have broken God's law and we are convicted – even as a Christian – as being a sinner.

As an unsaved person, the law can help them see their need for a Savior. As a Christian, the law can help us see our need for the Savior's heart.

For the unbeliever, they are convicted by the Law as being a sinner before God and in danger of judgment. As a Christian, we are convicted by the Law as being a sinner and in danger of displeasing God by living a carnal life. "Oh, is that all? Whew! For a minute there I thought it was going to be something important."

The sad truth is, that some Christians see it that way. As long as I don't go to hell or as long as I said the right words in the right formula, then I'm told I'll go to heaven and won't have to worry about judgment.

Scripture says if you are a disobedient, unloving Christian, then it doesn't matter what Christian label you wear, what dramatic experience you boast in, you are still a sinner. Perhaps a Christian, but still a sinner in the definition of someone who continues living a sinful lifestyle, displeasing to God and in violation of His holy word.

The power of God's law, can convict us of a sinful lifestyle.

### **The Penalty of the Law**

\* The Law of God can condemn us as guilty before God.

“The law of God has many commands but it is one law.”  
(FreeCommentary)

*We see our need for a Savior.*

We learn that 1 broken law carries the penalty of 10 broken laws. Consider the story of the *Rich Young Ruler*.

**Mat 19:16** ESV And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"

I have kept those commandments. All of which were people focused of loving your neighbor. But he had forsaken the Greatest commandment of Loving God First and foremost. Because of that, he was guilty of all the law.

Most people respond that way. I'm a good person, help others, haven't robbed a bank or murdered or committed adultery. Those are all other oriented. But most will not say, I have loved God with all my heart and soul and mind and strength – I have no other gods before me, I have no idols, I have not misused the name of God.

*We also see our need for the Savior's heart*

Without the change of Christ in the life of the Christian, we will forever fail at demonstrating the love of Christ to the world.

Compassion and conviction of the heart, will help us keep the whole law of God. Vertical relationship with God, which is the overflow to our relationships with others.

The First and Greatest commandment is First and Greatest for a reason. The Second commandment is second for a reason.

There was recently a conference and workshops on a book about a man's out of the body experience, "*90 Minutes In Heaven*".

How do you have a workshop on that? Now a conference on spending 90 minutes pleasing to God, or Living 90 minutes filled with the Holy Spirit, or 90 minutes living fully in the center of Gods' will – that might be a worthwhile conference. Or How to spend 90 minutes loving God with all you heart, soul, mind and strength. I might consider attending that.

## **THE TRIUMPHANT POWER OF MERCY**

God is a holy God of Judgment. God is also a compassionate God full of mercy and loving kindness.

**James 2:12-13** ESV (12) So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. (13) For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Thoughts and speech, our attitudes and our actions – every aspect of our lives will be held accountable to God's holy law.

### **Our Speech and Actions**

\* Both thought and expression are important when it comes to fulfilling Gods righteous expectation for us.

Imagine driving down the highway and suddenly you see state police sitting in the median. Immediately you lift your foot off the gas pedal, and look down at your speedometer, only to discover that you weren't even speeding. You don't have to be afraid of the

policeman, but seeing him, does help you remember the law and the speed limit.

## **The Law and Freedom**

The law of God can condemn us as sinners or set us free as those forgiven and following the law Giver. The Law of Liberty will condemn us as sinners or it will acquit us as forgiven. The law will proclaim that we have disobeyed or it will proclaim our obedience.

**Joh 8:31-36** ESV So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, (32) and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

## **When Mercy Triumphs**

We will all, one day, stand before God. Unbelievers will be judged regarding whether or not they have believed in God's only Son as their only Savior. Christians will be judged or evaluated regarding their loving obedience to God and loving works for others.

### *The Promise of Mercy*

Merciless for the poor, orphans, widows (1:27)

**Mat 5:7** ESV "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Reflection Question: How have I treated others this week? (1) at work (2) my own family members (3) those in need?

**2Cor. 5:8-10** ESV Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

v.13) At some level, we will be judged by God's law, but also how we treat others, regarding kindness, forgiveness, mercy and love.

### *The Triumph of Mercy*

Where judgment fails, mercy triumphs. Mercy, therefore is preferable. We think the only way a person can come to repentance is to be scared by the promise of eternal judgment and punishment.

Which does God prefer – justice or mercy? God's law and His character deserves justice, but His heart desires mercy. God Himself is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."<sup>[2Pet.3:9]</sup>

**Tit 3:4-7** ESV But when the *goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared*, (5) he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy...

God Himself, desire to display His loving-kindness and His mercy.

**Exo 20:2-6** ESV "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (3) "You shall have no other gods before me. (4) "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. (5) You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, (6) *but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

We tend to think that God's looming judgment is the only thing that can bring people to repent from their sins and trust in Christ as their Savior. However, it is also God's mercies that lead and draw us to repentance.

**Rom 2:1-4** ESV Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. (2) We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on

those who practice such things. (3) Do you suppose, O man--you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself--that you will escape the judgment of God? (4) Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Rom.2:11 (*"...For God shows no partiality..."*)

### **Obey It** - *Off the page and into my life*

**Christian:** Consider the law of God in your life. How do you measure up? Are you fulfilling God's law of love in showing mercy toward others? Or are you just interested in justice toward others for how they have treated you?

**1Pet. 4:17** ESV For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

**Seeker:** How do you measure up to the righteous standards of God's law? Are you free from God's punishment for sin? Have you been guilty of attempting to outweigh your sin with good works?<sup>[James 2:10]</sup>

Will you become a believer in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?<sup>[James2:1]</sup>

Sometimes we think it is through the threat of punishment for sin or a crime, that a person comes to repent for their actions. God can also use loving-kindness, as well as mercy and compassion to draw a person to Himself.

In Acts 16, a man was brought to Paul and he asked the question, "...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>[Acts16:30]</sup>

Paul replies with the word of God, "...Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..." <sup>[Acts 16:31]</sup>

What about you? What would prevent you from being forgiven for you sins and receiving the salvation of your soul today?

Then do what Paul urges, "...believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..."

### ----- Thinking Things Through -----

1) What kind of faith do I have? Is it a Faith That Makes A Difference to God and to others?

2) Am I exhibiting a true saving faith, fully verified and demonstrated by loving compassion and merciful actions toward others? If not, then what needs to take place to change?

"So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty) For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment." --James 2:12-13

### -----Praying It Through-----

Dear God, I want to have a heart like my Saviors! Right now, I don't. I submit myself to you. I ask you to change me. Help me to love You so much that it shows in how I view and treat others.

In Jesus' Name,  
--Amen!



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# **“Faith and Works: A Verdict That Demands Evidence”**

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TEXT: James 2:14-18

July 21, 2013

Theme: Evidence of the Christian life

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“So also faith by itself, if it does not have works,  
*is dead.*” - James 2:17 (ESV)

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A delusion is something that people believe in,  
despite a total lack of evidence.  
–Richard Dawkins

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**Jas 2:14-18** ESV What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? (15) If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? (17) So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (18) But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Today, we enter into a sort of courtroom, in order to understand the importance and connection between faith and works. The point James makes in this section is that “if we claim to have true faith,

then there must be supporting evidence which offers proof of that claim.”

## **A VERDICT THAT DEMANDS EVIDENCE**

A claim of faith is a verdict that demands evidence. The Christian faith must display the evidence of good works or deeds. Now James offers his opening statements.

**Jas 2:14** What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? (1:21)

Save him from what?? We probably immediately think of “save” referring to saving faith or salvation. His focus includes that, but most specifically he is referring to the Royal Law of Love and the evidence of Christian love, demonstrated by mercy, compassion and love in action. God wants each of us to be convicted – that is convicted by God’s law as a Christian, evidencing mercy.

**Jas 2:12** ESV So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.

He is referring to being judged under the law and convicted by our deeds.

## **The Verdict of Faith**

How can our faith be proven? Both faith and life are important. Our life will be judged and faith will be evidenced by our actions. The Law of Liberty will be the deciding factor. What we believe will be evidenced by what we do. What we do will be judged by the law of Liberty/freedom, that is, God’s Holy Word.

If there is a verdict of “true faith, then that verdict demands supporting evidence – like a court of law. In other words, the verdict will be dependent upon convincing evidence. For James, a true believer in Jesus Christ will be convicted of being a Christian by the supporting evidence of good works and godly living, and by showing mercy to others.

What good is the verdict or claim if the works or evidence don’t support it? Can a “faith” without the evidence of good works, hold

up in a court of law and declare one's innocence or set a person free from the charges of a crime or some act of disobedience, as we are judged by the law of God? *No!*

If a person has faith only, without good works, can that faith save, deliver or set them free? Likewise, can such faith prove them innocent of sin or guilty of true faith, if the verdict is to be made based on evidence? Again, the answer is no! God's law as James refers to it, judges actions, not good faith or well-meaning intentions.

### **Evidence of Faith is important**

Suppose you get pulled over for speeding. The officer walks up and asks, "did you realize you were speeding?" You reply, "Oh no officer, I had no idea." The officer asks, "Do you know what the speed limit is?" "Yes sir", you reply. "Have you ever been cited for speeding before?" the officer further inquires. "Never." Again the officer asks, "Did you mean to speed or was it an accident?" "Oh no officer of course not, it was an accident." To which the officer replies, "Oh well then, you're free to go." *In your dreams!!*

Knowledge, good intentions, or past records, do not affect guilt or innocence. It may affect the sentence you receive, but not the verdict itself. Faith without evidence or disobedience toward God's law brings the guilt of breaking that law. 1) what good are your excuses to the officer who caught you? None. 2) What good is the faith without actions or good works to back it up? None.

Faith without works is of no practical value, apart from the person who claims to possess it. Faith without works does not feed the hungry, or clothe the naked. Faith without works does not minister to the husbandless and fatherless, nor does it visit the sick or the prisoners. Faith without good deeds, does not stop a roof from leaking or help repair a broken automobile.

Faith without works - Can that kind of faith save you from the condemnation of the law which judges you by your actions? *No.* The specific Christian trait or good works or evidence of true faith

that James is referring to is Mercy, loving-kindness, merciful compassion on those who are in need.

## **EMPTY WORDS**

Next James helps us see the worthlessness of empty words. Our actions will convict or acquit us of the charges of being a true believer in Jesus.

**Jas 2:15-16** ESV (15) If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is *that*?

Or, what good is *that* statement? People who are in inadequately clothed or lacking in food are in need of something besides well wishes. They need genuinely caring people to be willing to get involved and risk the expense of practically helping to remedy the needy person's situation. That is faith with works!

Words without actions or faith without good works or claims of faith without evidence of mercy - *what good is that*? What kind of help is offered? What kind of difference is made? What good evidence to support the verdict of "I have faith" is there?

Are you a Christian? "Yes". Then it must be demonstrated in some observable and difference-making manner. That is what James is looking for.

## **The World Needs Faith**

The Unsaved World needs true Christian Faith. In verse 15, "What if" is the problem. In verse 16, the effect of a faith that is full of empty words, yet empty of good deeds cannot help remedy the problem. I am reminded of Jesus addressing His disciples in Matthew 25 as he refers to the last days and commends those people who were busy helping and ministering to Him. The disciples, unable to recall the incident of when they had helped Jesus, asked "when did this take place?" Jesus say, that what they did for the "least of these" who were in need, they did for Him<sup>[Mat.25:40]</sup>.

The world needs the evidence of true Christian faith. The unbelieving world needs to see faith in action – faith that really makes a difference.

## **God Demands True Faith**

In Matthew 7, Jesus says there will be people who consider themselves to be religious, but are disallowed from entering into His kingdom. They were involved in religious activities, but ultimately were not performing the will of God<sup>[Mat.7:21-22]</sup>. This is an easy mistake for any one of us. James clarifies that faith is all we need for forgiveness and entrance into heaven. However, faith accompanied with good works, is a crucial component of the Christian life.

## **WORKSLESS FAITH**

Finally, James helps us to see the worthlessness of a works-less faith. The verdict is a faith without works, or without obedience to God is dead, worthless faith of no value to God, to you or anyone else.

**Jas 2:17-18** ESV (17) So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (18) But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

## **The Shock of Eternity**

In Matthew 7, those who cried out “Lord, Lord”, it was too late. They got all the way to the judgment holding onto the things they thought were important and worthwhile. They were counting on things they thought would maybe get them a pat on the back and entrance into heaven, only to discover they don’t have entrance fee.

Some may try to argue, “But I prayed the prayer!” or “I tried to keep the 10 commandments”, yet something is missing. They required true faith in Christ. That true faith is expected to have

God-pleasing and others-helping kinds of works to go along with it – not to save them, but to demonstrate and verify that their faith is true, genuine and *saving* faith.

## **Crucially Inseparable Elements**

True faith in Jesus Christ, including genuine repentance, confession of sin, and saving faith in Christ's substitute for sin payment is crucial. Also, good works, evidencing obedience to God's word, and good works toward others is also crucial. These are intended to be two inseparable elements.

Everything we do matters. Everywhere we go matters. Every word we speak matters. Everyone we meet matters. How we treat others, matters.

### ----- Thinking Things Through -----

- 1) What characterizes my faith? Are my claims of true faith, backed up with “difference-making” deeds?
- 2) If I was on trial for being a Christian, would my actions be enough to convict me?

*“So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” - James 2:17 (ESV)*

### -----Praying It Through-----

Lord, fill my life with things that honor you and point others to you. In Jesus' Name,  
-Amen!

***Don't close this booklet yet!***



# ***Don't close this booklet yet!***

*without considering this all important question.*

## **Is Jesus Christ the Savior of *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?**

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; --  
*Romans 3:23*

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come from  
God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten  
Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but  
have everlasting life. --*John 3:16*

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him to die  
in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal  
life through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
-- *Romans 6:23*

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus  
Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still  
sinners, Christ died for us. ---*Romans 5:8*

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord  
will be saved." -- *Rom 10:13*

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he  
gave the right to become children of God, - *John 1:12*

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are  
truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

***Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your  
sins and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.***

## The ABCs

**A** - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

**B** - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

**C** - Confess your sins to God. *He already knows.*  
- also Confess Jesus as you LORD.

**Prayer:** Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

**Connect** with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

**Commit** yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

**Heb 10:24-25** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

**Act 2:41-42** So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

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For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:  
Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,  
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, [www.christefca.org](http://www.christefca.org)

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**We have a free booklet on:**

**Water Baptism:** *The First Step of Believer's Obedience.*  
*and also*

**A New Creation:** *Beginning Your New Life In Christ*

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***It is our prayer that you find Jesus Christ to be, your greatest purpose, your highest calling, your soul's source and joy, and your all-consuming passion.***

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1 PETER, pt.1-2 (2Vol): *Suffering in Sojourning*

1 PETER, pt.3-5 (3Vol): *The Church God Always Wanted*

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A NEW CREATION: *Beginning Your New Life In Christ*

ADVENT: *The Submission of Christ*

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*May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience  
and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship  
of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit  
in His Church and throughout our mission field*

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