LESSON THREE: James 1

**REVIEW**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 30 CE | Crucifixion/Resurrection/Day of Pentecost | | | Gospel is Preached Only to the Jews | **Jesus Appears to JAMES** (1 Cor. 15:7) | | | |
| 31 | Stephen Martyred | | | PAUL Persecutes the Church | | | |
| 32 |  | | |
| 33 |  | | |
| 34 | PAUL’S Conversion | Churches of Judea don’t know Paul | | Paul is in Arabia & Damascus 3 yrs. then meets with Peter for 15 days in Jerusalem & **meets James** (Gal. 1:18-20) | | | |
| 35 |  |
| 36 |
| 37 | Gospel to the Gentiles | | | | | | | PAUL in Syria and Cilicia Ministering to the Gentiles |
| 38 |  | | | | | | |
| 39 |
| 40 |
| 41 |
| 42 | Barnabas sent to Antioch | Paul Receives the Revelation of Grace | | | | | |
| 43 |  |  | | | | |  |
| 44 | **James Mentioned as Leadership** |  | | | | |  |
| 45 |  |  | | | | |  |
| 46 | **BOOK OF JAMES** to the Twelve Tribes (Jews) | | | | | | |
| 47 |  |  | Paul rebukes Peter (Gal.2) | | | **PAUL’S** 1st Missionary Journey | | |
| 48 |
| 49 |  | | | | | | | |
| 50 | **JERUSALEM COUNCIL ACTS 15: GENTILES NOT UNDER LAW, James Writes Letter to the Gentile Believers** | | | | | **PAUL’S** 2nd Missionary Journey | | |
| 51 |  | | | | |
| 52 | **GALATIANS: Righteousness by Faith Not Law** | | | | |
| 53 |  | | | | | **PAUL’S** 3rd Missionary Journey | | |
| 54 | Paul in Ephesus | | | | |
| 55 |
| 56 | **2 CORINTHIANS 12 “14 years ago” (42CE)** | | | | |
| 57 | **ROMANS: Righteous by Faith Not Law, Paul’s Great Love for Israel** | | | | | | | |
| 58 | **ACTS 21: Paul Submits to James to Appease Jews** | | | | | Paul Arrested in Jerusalem | | |
| 59 |  | | | | | | | |
| 60 |  | **PAUL IMPRISONED** in Rome; Writes Philippians, Philemon Colossians,  **Ephesians** | | | | | | |
| 61 |
| 62 | **JAMES EXECUTED by priestly authorities in Jerusalem** | **HEBREWS** is thought to have been written by Paul shortly before CE 64. | | | | | | |
| 63 |  |
| 64 | Nero’s Persecution | | | | | | | |
| 65 |  | | | | | | | |
| 66 |  | | | | | | | |
| 67 | **Peter and Paul Executed** by Nero | | | | | | | |
| 68 |  | | | | | | | |
| 69 |  | | | | | | | |
| 70 | Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem ☼ Church is Scattered | | | | | | | |

1. The revelations of the gospel of grace came to the church gradually.
2. They understood that salvation came by faith in Jesus Messiah and belief in His resurrection, but only preached to the Jews.
3. Paul was converted four years after the resurrection but initially only preached to Jews (3 years).
4. Seven years after the resurrection (three years after Paul’s conversion), the gospel was preached to the Gentiles via Peter due to a divine revelation.
5. Paul most likely began to preach salvation to the Gentiles at about this time.
6. There was a rift in the church for many years. Many Jews believed that in order to be saved, the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses.
7. About 7 years after Paul’s conversion, he had a vision and was taken up into heaven and we believe that is when he received the full revelation of the gospel of grace (that both Jew and Gentile were equal and free from all of the law).
8. For 20 years Jews were likely taught to keep the law.
9. Most Jews were still living under the law until the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, but the book of Hebrews was written 7-8 years before that, so it is thought that the believers were being delivered from the law via Paul’s letters.
10. Notice the many writings of Paul came to James’ attention after the scene in Acts 21. All of them spoke clearly of the gospel of God’s grace and freedom from the Law of Moses.
11. The early Church understood the facts of the Gospel, 1 Cor. 15, but until Paul’s revelation no one understood the full implication of the Gospel, i.e complete freedom from sin and the sin nature, and that we are to not look inward to perfect ourselves, but walk in His perfection.

*1 Corinthians 15:1-3   
Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*

**This Gospel was known and believed and preached, and turned the world upside down.  
  
In A.D. 42 Paul received the Revelation of the Gospel. The facts of the Gospel were already known, but what Paul received was the implication of what the facts mean. Paul was given the fullness of what the facts of the Gospel mean.**

James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

* James was a humble servant of God who faithfully ministered to the Jews primarily in Jerusalem all of his life.
* Although he was the half-brother of Jesus, he never used this as a claim to fame or authority.
* His letter was written before the gospel of the grace of God as taught by Paul was widely distributed.
* It was written to the Jews who had been dispersed and were experiencing persecution.

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

1. **All people who dwell on the planet encounter various trials, but for Christians, our trials improve us rather than bringing us down. While the troubles of a non-Christian might make him bitter, the troubles we face make us better. For this reason, when they come, we can rejoice. Paul expressed a similar thought.**

***Romans 5:1-5***

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through* ***whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand****; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. 3And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5****and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.***

* *Paul continually directed his readers to what God did for us in Christ—His grace and love.*

1. **It is important to note that James DOES NOT imply in any way that these trials are from God. Nor does Paul when He speaks of them. The problem is, most of those who comment or preach on these verses assume that the trials of which James and Paul speak are sent from God to perfect us. In a very strong way, this implies that the blood of Jesus was not enough. Whenever we try to add law or any other qualifier to what Jesus accomplished, we nullify grace. Furthermore, this is to imply that God sends evil to bring about good which is blasphemous. Neither writers make such an accusation. Yes, we will experience difficulties in these lives, and all those who seek to live godly in Christ will suffer persecutions, but GOD IS NOT TO BLAME FOR THEM.**

*The Book of James is usually taught from the perspective that we have two natures, and the old nature needs to be continually put down by us, and if we don’t, God will crush us with trials and hardships in order to break us. Perhaps you’ve also heard that whichever “nature” you feed is the one which will grow. Seems logical except that we only have one new nature.*

1. **The intention of troubles and persecution is to DESTROY US, but quite the opposite takes place for those who believe in Jesus. James was writing to the Jews who had been dispersed by persecution. They were experiencing many trials and difficulties. James is trying to encourage them. What their enemies meant for evil, God would turn for good. It would not be encouraging at all to say that God was the mastermind behind it all.**
2. **We would be in error to think we should praise God FOR these things. We don’t rejoice that someone has passed away or that someone’s house has burned down.**

[***Romans 12:15***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12:15&version=NKJV)

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

[***1 Thessalonians 5:18***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians+5:18&version=NKJV)

*In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

1. **“Joy” here means cheerfulness, that is, calm delight: - gladness, joy**[[1]](#footnote-1)**.** Instead of panicking when troubles arise, James instructs them to take them calmly and with joy. Why? It is because the trials work for their good.
2. **Notice also that Paul expresses the same idea in the passage above when he tells them to exult in their tribulations.** Exult means to boast, glory, and rejoice. The normal response to troubles is to complain, be angry or sorrowful, but not for the believer. Instead, we rejoice because we know they will all work for good for us.
3. **Jesus introduced this concept of rejoicing during trials. Certainly James and Paul knew this teaching well and it was reflected in their writings.**

***Matthew 5:10-12***

*“Blessed (supremely blessed, happy) are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

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

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

1. **Here James offers encouragement. Certainly these dispersed saints had many difficult decisions to make. He consoles them that all they need to do is to ask God for wisdom. While encouraging them, he also gives a solid lesson about faith.**
2. **When we ask God for something, we are to believe without doubting that He will answer. Jesus taught this concept also.**

***Mark 11:22-24***

*And Jesus answered saying to them, “Have faith in God. 23 Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’* ***and does not doubt in his heart****, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be* granted *him. 24 Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be* granted *you.*

*Doubting is not the temptation to not believe. It isn’t the fear we face. It isn’t the emotions that swirl about us as a storm is raging. It isn’t the reality we face when we are made aware of the facts about our situation. It isn’t the insecurity we feel when standing in faith. All of these things are normal human emotions. God is not asking you to not feel or to ignore the facts of your circumstance. He’s asking you to choose to believe in Him in the midst of it all.*

*Doubting is much more sinister than our reasonable responses to trouble. It is a purposeful choice to not believe. The word for doubt in the Greek is “diakrino”. It means “to withdraw, to desert, to separate oneself in a hostile spirit, to oppose, strive with, dispute, contend, to be at variance with oneself”. When we doubt God we are deserting faith in Him. We are separating from Him in a hostile manner. We are opposing Him, striving against Him, and disputing faith in Him. We are doing these things deliberately and knowingly.*

*Faith comes by hearing the good news of what God has provided and promised in Christ. After we hear the good news, faith will come to us, but we have the choice to receive faith or to doubt. Doubt nullifies faith.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

1. **Some commentators take a leap from logic to interpret verse eight to mean that all believers have a double mind! No! James is saying that those who doubt have a double mind.**

**Christians DO NOT HAVE A DUAL NATURE!!!**

1. The NIV incorrectly translates these verses using the term “sinful nature”. The real word is “sarx” which refers to the human body. The word “sarx” appears 151 times from Matthew to Revelation. The NIV does not translate the word “sarx” as sinful nature except in these two verses. (The Amplified Version uses the term sinful nature eight times!) No wonder people are confused.

***Romans 7:18***

*For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my****sinful nature****. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*

*Note: If one has “the desire to do good”, then he/she does NOT have a sinful nature.*

***Romans 7:25***

*Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.*

*Note: If someone is trying to live under law and grace, they will experience this conflict, but if they live only under grace “sin will not have dominion over you because you are not under law but under grace” (Rom. 67:14).*

1. **Paul’s whole point in Romans 6 is that we are free from, dead to, and not under the dominion of sin because we are not under law but under grace.**
2. **All things have become new. This includes our natures, though we still live in the flesh (a mortal body).**

***2 Corinthians 5:17Amplified Bible (AMP)***

*Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things* ***[the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away****. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life].*

1. **Romans 7 was not referring to a dual nature. It was a description of the one who adds law to grace. Law produces sinful desires. Law strengthens sin.**

***Romans 7:9***

*I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.*

1. **This is not even the point of what James is saying. He is not saying in any way that all Christians have a dual nature. He is saying that the double-minded man is unstable in all of his ways. Period. An unstable man is one who is asking God for something but deliberately not believing he will receive it.**
2. **Not only can we ask for wisdom and receive it, but Paul went one step further and taught that Jesus IS our wisdom. He is guiding us by His Spirit.**

***1 Corinthians 1:30***

*But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31so that, just as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”*

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

*Christianity brings to the poor a new sense of their own value. (a) They learn that they matter in the Church. In the early Church, there were no class distinctions. It could happen that the slave was the minister of the congregation, preaching and dispensing the sacrament, while the master was no more than a humble member. Barclay*

1. **This is also a common theme in Scripture. We see it in the Old Covenant teachings, from the lips of Jesus, and from Paul. There is a tendency for those who are rich or for the powerful to oppress the poor or the weak.**

[***Proverbs 29:23***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+29:23&version=NASB)

*A man’s pride will bring him low,*

*But a humble spirit will obtain honor.*

***Matthew 23:1-11***

*Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, 2saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; 3therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. 4They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. 5But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. 6They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. 8But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. 11But the greatest among you shall be your servant. 12Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.*

***Philippians 2:5-8***

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant,* and *being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

12Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

1. This verse seems to contradict itself. On the one hand James says that those who persevere under trial and who have been thus approved will receive the crown of life, but then in the same breath he says that the Lord has promised the crown of life to those who love Him. Which is it?

The only other place the “crown of life” is mentioned is in the book of Revelation from the lips of the resurrected Jesus to the church of Smyrna.

[***Revelation 2:10***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+2:10&version=NKJV;AMP) ***NKJV***

*New King James Version*

*Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw* some *of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

***Amplified Bible***

*Fear nothing that you are about to suffer. Be aware that the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested [in your faith], and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful to the point of death [if you must die for your faith], and I will give you the crown [consisting] of life.*

* This verse seems be in agreement. Whatever the “crown” may be, whether a physical crown or the joy of everlasting life, the ones who love God and who do not deny their faith in Jesus will receive it.
* **This is not saying that enduring temptations is how we are saved.** However, there is evidence to support the idea that those who would deny their faith in Jesus will not be saved. Christians still debate what apostasy and its consequences are.

***Hebrews 6:4-6***

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.*

***Hebrews 10:28-29***

*Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?*

[***2 Timothy 4:7***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy+4:7&version=NKJV)

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

1. The second question we should pose is, are we rewarded for loving God or for believing in Him? This is a fair question, but it really isn’t as conflicting as we might think. Paul and John makes it clear that those who believe in God are those who love Him. While it is possible that James is referring to the Old Covenant command to love God with all of one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength, we don’t know this with certainty. The important thing to recognize is that believing in God is the same as loving God. We are those who believe and thus we are those who love. Sinners don’t love God.

***1 John 5:1***

*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.*

***Romans 8:28***

*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

13Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

1. **The word “tempted” can refer to temptation to sin or to testing someone to see how they will respond.** In this context, it is clear that it is in reference to sin. God doesn’t tempt his children to do evil.

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

1. **It is true that we cannot blame God if we sin. If we have lust in our hearts to commit sin, that lust will grow and give birth to sin. Sin brings forth death—not in the eternal sense (because we are forgiven) but in the sense that sin does not bring about life.**
2. **Still, it is fair to ask ourselves why a believer would have lust in his/her heart in the first place. Having lust in our hearts conflicts with what Paul taught.** Paul taught that believers are dead to and free from the dominion of sin because we are not under law but under grace. He spoke of the absurdity of a Christian sinning.

***Romans 6:2, 5-7, 11-14, 17-23***

*How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*

*5For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7For he who has died has been freed from sin. 10For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

*12Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

*17But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.*

*20For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. 23For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1. **We cannot deny that it happens that Christians become prisoners again of lust, but why?** Keep in mind that James, at the time of writing this book, likely still believed, as did most the Jewish believers of that day, that believers were still under the law. He may have been innocently teaching a combination of law and grace. The Messiah came. He name was Jesus. All who believed in Him would be saved, but did that mean they were to abandon the law? The Jews of this time still practiced many aspects of the law. **The problem is that whether taught innocently or deliberately, the law strengthens sin. It didn’t matter if they didn’t know this. It is simply the truth. Paul taught that the power of sin is the law (1 Cor. 15:56).** Since James didn’t teach the people that they were free from the law and thus not under the dominion of sin, it is highly likely that they were stuck in the frustrations Paul described in Romans 7—unable to do what they wanted, and doing what they didn’t want to do—in other words, led by their lusts. This is not the normal Christian life. It is the misery of a Christian who is trying to live by law instead of by grace through faith.

***Romans 7:4-11***

*Therefore, my brethren, you also have become* ***dead to the law through the body of Christ****, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. 5For when we were in the flesh,* ***the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.*** *6But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*

*7What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.” 8But sin, taking opportunity by* ***the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire****. For apart from the law sin was dead.* ***9I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.*** *10And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. 11For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.*

* **Remember that Paul lived as a Christian at least 8 years before he received the revelation of the Gospel of Grace, and therefore had the battle of sin within him because of the Law still being an important part of his life.**

1. **Without a complete understanding that we are free from sin *because* we are free from law, James had no other remedy in his teaching but to blame and condemn them into not sinning.** This is very common in the church today where there is no awareness that we have been changed. In fact, you will notice in Paul’s letters that his appeal to them not to sin was based on who they were in Jesus and the fact that they were new creations created for good works, not for sin. James lays no such foundation.

***Ephesians 4:1-3***

*I, therefore (because of all the glorious things he just taught them in Chapters 1-3 about what God accomplished in them through Christ), the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called (what he just taught them), 2with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

16Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

1. **In other words, God doesn’t tempt you (doesn’t send you trials or tempt you to sin—which is what he’s been talking about). He sends good and perfect gifts to us.**

*He gives constantly. “Cometh down” is a present participle: It keeps on coming down. God does not give occasionally; He gives constantly. Wiersbe*

1. **James calls God the Father of Lights.** Here we have a lovely picture of our Father. He gives good gifts, not trials and temptations. In Him there is no fickleness (yes, that’s how variation is defined in the Greek) or shifting shadows. He doesn’t turn His back on us.

18In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

19aThis you know, my beloved brethren.

*By granting us a new birth, God declares that He cannot accept the old birth. Throughout the Bible, God rejects the firstborn and accepts the second born. He accepted Abel, not Cain; Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau. He rejects your first birth (no matter how noble it might have been in the eyes of men), and He announces that you need a second birth. Wiersbe*

1. **James acknowledges here that our salvation is of God’s doing (not ours). “Brought us forth” is the word “begat” giving reference to our new birth. We are new creations in Him.** James adds, “This you know.” From His perspective, this would not be new information for them. He was simply repeating what they already knew. Salvation by His doing and the concept of being a new creature was also evident in Paul’s writings**.**

***1 Corinthians 1:30-31 NASB***

*But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.”*

***2 Corinthians 5:17***

*Therefore, if anyone* is *in Christ,* he is *a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

19b But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

1. **While it is true that we should be quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to anger AND that our anger doesn’t accomplish God’s righteous purposes, we must also notice that there is a “therefore” attached to the instruction of the word (likely referring to the gospel since scripture alone doesn’t save us). Might James have been confronting those who still opposed the good news of Jesus as Messiah?**
2. **Paul also told believers to put aside sin, but with the rationale that it was not logical for them to do otherwise as those freed from sin.** Here is the differentiation, and it is important. James approach was incomplete.

**James: Put aside filthiness and wickedness so that you may receive the word and be saved.**

**Paul: You have received the word and are saved, therefore put aside all filthiness and wickedness.**

**VERY IMPORTANT!**

**It is NOT true that either approach is okay because they have the same purpose (to get people to stop sinning). Using the law to bring about righteousness is precisely what Paul taught was “another gospel”.**

1. **This same teaching is prevalent in the church today. Sinners are told they need to repent of sin to be saved instead of being saved by believing in Jesus. (Thankfully, many who hear this wrong approach are also believing in Jesus, so they end up being saved anyway, but it is a poor foundation.) Believers are still taught that they must repent from sin to be “right with God” instead of being taught that because they are already right with God by faith, not to sin.**

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

1. **For the believers even in the early church “the word” or the “word of God” referred to the message of good news of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. It is more likely that James is here making reference to the gospel of Jesus Christ, not written scripture. However, since those who today do not understand that “word of God” means the gospel, and interpret it to mean the Bible, this verse takes on a legalistic tone. James is not to blame for how people misinterpret his words.**

***Acts 6:7***

*Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

**Did the Bible spread, or did the message of Jesus spread?**

***Acts 8:14***

*Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.*

**Did Samaria receive the Bible or the gospel?**

***Acts 11:1***

*Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.*

**Did the Gentiles receive the Bible or the message of salvation through Jesus Christ that Peter shared with them?**

***Acts 12:24***

*But the word of God grew and multiplied.*

**Did the Bible grow?**

***Acts 13:5***

*And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as* their *assistant.*

**The disciples were preaching the gospel of Jesus, not the Bible. Yes, they used Scripture to do so, but it was the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus that they taught.**

***Acts 13:44***

*On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.*

**The Jews gathered to hear what the apostles were teaching. The Jews already knew the Scriptures. They came to hear the gospel.**

***Acts 13:46***

*Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.*

* **The Jews rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ, so Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles.**

1. **James is speaking of the gospel when he says “word of God”. Be doers of the gospel and not only hearers of the gospel. If he is addressing an unbeliever, this would mean, believe in the gospel—do it, don’t just hear it. If addressing a believer, this would mean live the gospel—do it.**

*Colossians 2:6*

*As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,*

1. **If we only look at the gospel and walk away, we are not changed. If we look into the gospel and see Jesus, we will be transformed.**

***2 Corinthians 3:15-18***

*But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. 16Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

1. **When James writes “the perfect law”, the “law of liberty” is he referring to the Law of Moses? How can he be when he is speaking of the gospel of Jesus Christ? It is more likely that he was referring to the gospel as the law of liberty actually contrasting it to the Law of Moses because he called it “perfect” and one of “liberty”. Commentators are all over the map on this one. Some think there is no conflict between keeping the Law of Moses and the law of the gospel. We found these commentaries to be the most inclined to support the idea that James was not referring to the Law of Moses, but to the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

***Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible***

*But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty,… By which is meant, not the moral law, but the Gospel; for only of that is the apostle speaking in the context: this is no other than the word of truth, with which God begets men of his own will; and is the ingrafted word which is able to save, and of which men should be doers, as well as hearers, James 1:18, and this is compared to a glass by the Apostle Paul, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and the word here used for looking into it is the same word the Apostle Peter uses of the angels, who desired to look into the mysteries of the Gospel, 1 Peter 1:12 all which serve to strengthen this sense; now the Gospel is called a law; not that it is a law, strictly speaking, consisting precepts, and established and enforced by sanctions penalties;* ***for it is a declaration of righteousness and salvation by Christ****; a publication of peace and pardon by him; and a free promise of eternal life, through him; but as it is an instruction, or doctrine.*

[***Benson Commentary***](http://biblehub.com/commentaries/benson/james/1.htm)

[*James 1:25*](http://biblehub.com/james/1-25.htm)*. But whoso looketh — Not with a transient glance, but, as παρακυψας signifies, bending down, as it were, with an intention to fix his eyes upon, examine with accuracy, and search all things to the bottom. The expression implies much thought and meditation, joined with self- examination: into the perfect law — Namely, that of the gospel, termed a law, as being a rule of faith and practice, obligatory upon all to whom it is made known, acquitting or condemning men, (for by it they will be judged at the last day,) and determining our state for ever: called a perfect law, 1st, Because it is clear, concise, full, having no deficiency, and yet containing nothing superfluous. 2d, Because of its superiority to the law of Moses, which made no man perfect, either in respect of justification or sanctification,* [*Hebrews 7:10*](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/7-10.htm)*; whereas the gospel is calculated to make men perfect in both respects. And the apostle terms it the law of liberty, 1st, In opposition to the ceremonial law, which was a yoke of bondage the Jews could not bear, and from which it freed all that received it; Christ’s yoke being easy, his burden light, and his commandments not grievous. 2d, Because it delivers all true believers from the guilt of past sin, from the curse of the law, and from the wrath of God. 3d, Because it rescues them from the power of sin and Satan, of the world and the flesh, and from the slavery of their lusts and passions, restoring the dominion of reason and conscience in their minds, which is true liberty. 4th, Because it saves those, on whom it has its designed influence, from all slavish fear of God, all tormenting fear of death and hell, and the whole spirit of bondage. Observe, reader, he who receives the gospel in faith, love, and new obedience, is free; he that does not is not free, but a slave to sin, and a criminal before God.*

1. **If we falsely conclude that James is telling the believers to be doers of the law instead of doers of the gospel (the word of God), then we will think that when he writes that we will be blessed for doing the word of God, that we are still under the blessings and curses of the law. However, if he is saying that we are blessed for doing the gospel, how could we argue with Him since this is true?**

26If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.

1. **James continues his discourse on not bridling one’s tongue. Yet, what he says is true. Our words reflect our religion-beliefs.**

27Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

1. **James introduces here a concept he will develop in his letter. Words are not enough to demonstrate that our religion is pure and undefiled. “Religion” here can also be translated “worship” and carries with it the idea of our practices. Our actions are what declare our beliefs. True believers will not love this world, and they will love one another, not just in word, but in deed.**

***1 John 2:15-17***

*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. 16For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

1. **It was considered a principle duty for families to take care of their own widows. If a widow had no family to take care of her, it was considered the duty of the church.**

***Acts 6:1***

*Now in those days, when*the number of*the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists,[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=acts+6&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-27103a)*] because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.*

***1 Timothy 5:3-8***

*Honor widows who are really widows.****4****But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Timothy+5&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-29768a)*] acceptable before God.****5****Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.****6****But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.****7****And these things command, that they may be blameless.****8****But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

1. **Keeping oneself unstained by the world is a reasonable encouragement.**

[***John 15:19***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15:19&version=NKJV)

*If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

[***John 17:15***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17:15&version=NKJV)

*I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.*

[***1 John 2:15***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John+2:15&version=NKJV)

*If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

***Romans 12:1-2***

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

1. Unless otherwise noted, all definitions are from Strong’s Concordance. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. From the upcoming book Overcoming the Overwhelming by Grace through Faith NOT Law, a 48-Day Journey toward Rediscovering Faith in God, by C. D. Hildebrand, Xulon Press, 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)