Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

An Introduction to James, Part 2
Scripture: James 1:1
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Let's open our Bibles to the truth as recorded in the epistle of James. James chapter 1, we're just beginning a study in James and I really believe God is going to enrich our lives in ways beyond our wildest imaginations as we pursue the truth of this great epistle.

As we begin a look again at verse 1 and a little bit of an overview of the book which we did not complete last time, let me remind you that if anything is clear in Scripture, if anything is obvious from Scripture, it is that there is a true faith, there is a true relationship with God, there is a genuine salvation, there is a right way to come to know God, there is a right way to be redeemed. And if that is true, it is a corollary to that that Satan, the enemy of God, will do everything in his power to counterfeit that right way, that genuine path, that true salvation. One of the foremost if not the foremost strategy of Satan in the world is to counterfeit salvation, is to produce a non-saving faith. Please know that. And if it seems through the years that I have emphasized that much, then understand it is become it is so much emphasized on the pages of holy Scripture. Satan primarily disguises himself as if he were an angel of what? of light. And his objective is to create a non-saving system of religion. His effort is to generate a non-saving faith within the true religion. Understand the big picture.

Around the world all of the false religions spawned by the enemy are designed to give people a false sense of security in religion. And so he wants to produce non-saving religion, religion that damns people to eternal hell. And within the true religion he fights that by producing a non-saving faith, people who believe themselves to be redeemed who are not, who are living under the most frightening delusion imaginable. Satan's ploy is to attempt to make people think they are right with God when they are not. I do not believe that Satan wants people to hate God, to run from God, there are some people who do that. Satan wants people to come to the wrong god in the wrong way and feel secure when they shouldn't. He wants them to think they have solved the issue of religion. They have solved the issue of faith. Their destiny is secure when in fact it is not. And they will be among those who say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name and cast out demons and done many wonderful works? And then will He profess to them, `Depart from Me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity.'"

Now if there is a true faith and if Satan attacks with a counterfeit faith, then God will deal with the knowledge of that attack by calling the church to self-examination. That is why in 2 Corinthians it tells

us in chapter 13 and verse 5, "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith." That is why 1 John was written. That is why a portion of 2 Peter was written. And that is also why James was written. These epistles have as a primary objective the purpose of causing self-examination, self-examination. James wants to present to us the character of living faith as opposed to dead faith, the character of saving faith as opposed to non-saving faith. But he's merely picking up a continual biblical theme. And that biblical theme is this...true saving faith is verified by righteous behavior. Right? True saving faith is verified by righteous behavior.

Follow with me a little bit and let's see how this appears again and again in the Word of God. Let's go back to the beginning of the New Testament to the third chapter of Matthew and you will notice in the third chapter of Matthew in the ministry of John the Baptist it tells us that all of the people in Jerusalem and Judea and the region around the Jordan were coming out to John as he was baptizing in the wilderness and crying for repentance in preparation for the Kingdom and the Messiah. And they were baptized, verse 6 says, by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said to them, "O generation of snakes, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" By the way, modern mesial logical technique would not like his approach. This is not a subtle approach to say to people, "You generation of snakes, who warned you to flee the wrath to come?" And then in calling them to a true salvation away from a false religion, he says this, "Bring forth therefore fruit that fits...what?...repentance." From John the Baptist on the New Testament says "true repentance is verified by righteous deeds."

Look with me at the fifteenth chapter of John's gospel and a familiar text to all of us, that wonderful section on the vine and the branches. And verse 8, "In this...says Jesus...is My Father glorified," and here comes the interpretive key to the whole section, "that you bear much fruit so shall you be My disciples." It doesn't take a Phi Beta Kappa to figure out that a disciple is known by his...what?...fruit. No fruit, no saving faith. And the branches that bore no fruit in the parable of the vine and the branches indicate non-saving faith, people who superficially attach themselves to the true faith but do not produce fruit indicating no true life of God. In fact, the classic example would be a Judas branch.

In Acts, as we move through the New Testament, we find the same theme and I would just draw your attention to chapter 26. And here is the testimony of the Apostle Paul to King Agrippa and he understands this true saving faith as made manifest in works, "Whereupon," verse 19, "O King Agrippa, after hearing the call of God, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but showed first unto them at Damascus and then at Jerusalem and throughout all the borders of Judea and then to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God...follow this...and do works that fit repentance." True repentance verified in works.

And then you come to the epistles of the New Testament, most notably Ephesians chapter 2 and a familiar verse you need not turn to, listen to it, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto...what?...good works which God sovereignly has ordained that we would walk in them."

You come to the pastoral epistles. Look with me to Titus chapter, Titus chapter 2 verse 11, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, and what does saving grace teach? It teaches us that “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we shall live soberly, righteously, godly in this present age." If salvation produces anything it produces godliness, soberness, righteousness because verse 14 says, "Christ was given to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify unto Himself a people of His own zealous of good works."

John essentially says the same thing in his wonderful first epistle, chapter 5 verse 2, "By this we know we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments for this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, notice this, and His commandments are not burdensome." What does he mean by that? He means that true saving faith produces obedience which is not burdensome but which is joyous.

Now the sum of all those I've read to you, and they're just samples, is that true saving faith is verified by righteous deeds. Living faith in terms that James might use can be seen by living works.

Now listen, since this is the focal point of Satan's attack on the church to produce a non-saving faith, since this is the major conflict point of the spiritual battle between God and Satan, between a non-saving and a saving religion, a non-saving and a saving faith, there is little wonder then that it is such a theme in Scripture, little wonder. Satan wants to make people comfortable and secure with non-saving faith. He wants them to believe they're on their way to heaven when they're on their way to hell, and this is so essential. This is so crucial that the first New Testament book written chronologically, the epistle of James written in the mid-forties of that first century, the first epistle, the first New Testament book written was written to deal with the issue of saving faith as over against non-saving faith. James then deals with the very heart of the matter and calls us to genuine salvation.

Look at the last two verses in James, chapter 5 verses 19 and 20 as we just continue to get a feel for this book. "Brethren," he says, verse 19 chapter 5, "if any of you do err from the truth," may I suggest to you that that would be tantamount to having a non-saving faith. One of you that is in the visible church, one of you who calls himself a brother, but you err from the truth and one comes along and converts him, “epistrepho,” to turn him right around to go the other direction, not modification, transformation, and one of you turns him right around to saving faith, then let him know that he who turns that sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death. The error is the word in the Greek for delusion and what delusion is it? The delusion of salvation. When you turn a sinner from the delusion of the wrong way of salvation, you save a soul. That word means an inner man, from death, spiritual death and you cover or hide a multitude of sins. That is simply a colloquial expression meaning you bring forgiveness. You secure for that person the true forgiveness they desire. That, by the way, is an Old Testament statement, it is a Jewish statement and that's why it appears in James which was written to a Jewish audience. You will find the same statement in Psalm 32:1 and Psalm

85:2.

The epistle then, listen, beloved, this is such an important thing, the epistle then is written to give to the church a manual of tests by which they can identify people in the congregation who are in error and have erred from the truth and turn them around to saving faith. That's its intent. I grieve when I pick up a commentary on James and it starts out by saying, "Now there's no basic theme in James, James is just giving us a whole lot of practical hints about life, somewhat randomly in order such as the Proverbs." That couldn't be more remote from the truth. James tells you at the very conclusion what he has in mind. Take this test and start to apply it in the church and if you apply it to someone in error, you will...and they respond, you will turn a sinner from the way that leads to death and you will bring him to forgiveness.

So the epistle is all about tests of living faith. And the test, beloved, very simple, the tests of living faith are all related to how a person lives, how they behave. It isn't a question of what you say you believe, it's a question of how you live.

Now before we look at the overview of the tests in James, let's go back to verse 1 again chapter 1, as there were some things I didn't get to cover. James, and remember, this is James our Lord's brother, that's what he is called in Galatians 1:19 and he is a pillar of the church, Galatians 2:9, leader of the Jerusalem Church, the key elder there, the leader of the Council of Jerusalem of Acts 15, the very half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. And last time we looked at his life and character and theology and ministry and we ended up by seeing what a humble man he was. He simply says, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." I love that. He doesn't say, "James, the head of the Jerusalem church." He doesn't say, "Reverend Holy Doctor James." He doesn't say, "James the living, breathing brother of the Lord Himself." James, a servant. I like that. That's my kind of man. “Doulos,” a slave by birth. He would not exalt himself with reference to his human relationship to Jesus. He would not even say, "James, who saw with his own eyes the resurrected Christ who happened to be his own half-brother." He says nothing about any of that, just James. It fits. Fits.

Look at chapter 2 verse 1, "My brethren...he says...have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ the Lord of glory with respect of what? persons." And how about, how about chapter 3? "My brethren, be not many teachers knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment, for in many things we all stumble." He really identifies, doesn't he? How about chapter 4 verse 6? "He giveth more grace wherefore He saith, God resist the proud and gives grace to the humble." James understands no respect of persons. James understands that he's a stumbling sinner like everybody else. And he even says in chapter 3 in the next verse, verse 3 that the person who doesn't offend with his tongue is a perfect man, and he wouldn't call himself that. He's not under any illusion that he can elevate himself above everybody else. He's a model leader. He's strong, as we saw last time. He's authoritative. He's selfless. He has the heart of a servant. He is humble. He makes no claim to title. He makes no claim to rank whatsoever.

By the way, he is not an apostle. An apostle was a sent one, he was never sent. By the way, he was present in Acts chapter 1 when they were seeking to replace Judas and they did not choose him, they chose a man named Matthias. He wasn't even in the running. He was not even considered. You read Acts 1:14 to 23 he's not even considered. He was never sent out with the gospel. He does not rank with the apostles. He was the shepherd of the church at Jerusalem and he knew humility. In fact, if you understood the Greek text you would see the Greek order is very different. The Greek order reads like this, I love this, "James, of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, a servant," so that the priority in the order of words is of God and the Lord Jesus Christ me, I'm just a servant. That's a very humble order, expressive of his devoted submission to the one he grew up with but didn't believe in until he saw Him in His resurrection glory.

And would you please note this? This is so powerful. "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." He says, "I have two masters...God and the Lord Jesus Christ." By the way, do you remember Matthew 6:24? Jesus said this, "No man, are you ready for this? can serve two masters." No man can serve two masters. James says I have two masters, of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is not possible humanly. Think about it. You couldn't have two masters without conflict, right? If a person was a servant at the same time of two masters, there would be conflict. But here it is possible. And James is giving us in a very deep and sensitive way a statement about the unity of the trinity; only in my service to God can I serve two masters, God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. James could not style himself as a slave of two intelligences in heaven unless those two intelligences were co-equal and co-eternal. They must if they had the same and equal right of property to James been in themselves one and the same and therefore does James cry out in the simplicity of his language the profound truth that God and Christ are one. He believed in only one God. James 2:19, "Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well." There was only one God, yet he had two Lords, marvelous, rich. He understood John 10:30, he understood that Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." He understood what Philip couldn't quite handle, "If you've seen Me you've seen the Father." And he refers, I think it's so important, he refers to Jesus, and I love this, "the Lord Jesus Christ." He grew up with Him knowing Him as Jesus. Jesus a common name, Joshua, common name. He grew up never believing this was God in human flesh. He grew up with this other brother in the family, never believing Him to be supernatural, never believing Him to be the Messiah. But all of a sudden He isn't just my brother, Jesus, He is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was His human name, Christ the indication of His Messiahship and Lord refers to His sovereign deity, and by the way, he refers to Jesus as Lord fourteen times in this epistle, fourteen times.

So we see James in his humility and in the sense of servitude that he bore to God and the Lord Jesus Christ. But we have to ask the question we didn't get to ask last week, to whom did James write? Whom did he write? Look at verse 1 again. He wrote to the twelve tribes. Now it's obvious who that is, the Jews. The twelve tribes is a common title for the Jews, one used in the New Testament on many occasions. They were referred to as Israel, as the people of God, the children of God, the nation of

God and also they were referred to as the twelve tribes. In fact they are so called in Matthew 19:28, in Acts 26:7, even in Revelation chapter 7 verse 4 they are referred to as the twelve tribes because that was their original delineation. And, in fact, the prophets themselves, the prophets of the Old Testament looked forward to the time when scattered Israel and Judah would be brought back together in a union. They were looking for the time when all twelve would be reconstituted as one nation. You remember the kingdom had split after Solomon and the northern kingdom around 722, Israel the ten tribes had been taken away, never really to return. Some of those ten tribes all filtered back down into Judah so all twelve were still there, but they have always longed for the time when the whole nation is reconstituted, the prophets saw it coming, Isaiah 11:12 and 13. You'll find it in Jeremiah 3:18, Jeremiah 50 verse 4, you'll find Ezekiel 37 the great chapter on the reconstitution of the people of Israel. Under Hezekiah and under Josiah, many of the remnant, as I said, of that ten-tribe kingdom that was taken into captivity came to Jerusalem to worship, you can read that in 2 Chronicles 29, 2 Chronicles 30 chapter 34, many of those places.

And so, the Jews clung to a hope of a future solidarity. There would be a gathering together. And so in the mind of James and certainly in the mind of God the people of God were still constituted, the twelve tribes were still together, even though some people didn't know what tribe they were from, some did. They were still all represented. And so it was well to refer to the Jews as the twelve tribes. The ten that had been taken away were not lost, and I reject that teaching that indicates they were and some people say they wandered across Europe and then they ended up in England and now they're us, Anglo Saxons...not so. The ten tribes came back, filtered down and were reconstituted in the people of God and so can still be referred to as the twelve tribes. But which of the twelve tribes is he speaking to? Which of the Jews? Notice, the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad...literally, in the dispersion. That's what the Greek says. In the diaspora, “dia” means the idea of through and “spora” means the idea of scattering or sowing seed. So these are the Jews who through scattering were dispersed out everywhere. Diaspora gives us the word "dispersed."

Now the term "dispersion" refers to Jews outside the land of Palestine, all right? File that in your mind, that's a very common term. The nation of Israel for many centuries had been scattered and always referred to as the diaspora, using the Greek term, the scattered Jews. You can go all the way back to Deuteronomy 29 and verse...I think it's about verse 27, where God says to them that in the event of their unbelief and disobedience they're going to be scattered, and that really was the case. The first real major expulsion came, as I said, when the northern ten tribes known as the nation Israel, the Northern Kingdom was taken captive by Assyria, 2 Kings 17, 1 Chronicles 5. The ten tribes of the north hauled away never to return again as an entity, though, as I said, many of the people still filtered down to reconstitute the nation but in 722 the first expulsion, the first diaspora.

The second major dispersion came 586, that was known as the Babylonian Captivity, they were taken out of the land, dispersed through the Babylonian Empire. I would say that the third major expulsion came around 63, not long before the coming of Christ when Pompey conquered the Jews, he took

many of them to Rome as slaves and many, many of those Jews populated Rome and developed into a society there until they were all banished about 19 A.D. They were all kicked out of Rome and then scattered further all over that part of the world.

Through the years not only was there the major expulsions I have just mentioned, but there were many Jews who drifted out of the land. So there were many Jews in the diaspora, or the dispersion in general. In fact, at some point in time near the life of Christ there were as many, according to historians, as a million Jews in the city of Alexandria alone. In 50 B.C., fifty years before the time of Christ, they had built there a temple strictly for the use of Egyptian Jews so they could worship in their own way. Ten thousand of them were massacred in Damascus, again indicating they were spread everywhere. They were all through Asia Minor, they were all over the Mediterranean. Josephus said, and I quote, "There is no city, no tribe, whether Greek or Barbarian in which Jewish law and Jewish customs have not taken rest," end quote.

In about 140 B.C. the Cybelene oracles say that every land and every sea is filled with Jews. They were scattered everywhere. And when a great festival in Jerusalem occured such as Pentecost, or Passover, some great feast, they would come from everywhere and all the diaspora would be represented again. That's why when the church was born and they spoke the wonderful works of God under the anointing of the Spirit of God, when those flames of fire like tongues came down and they spoke the works of God, that's why they spoke in all those languages listed in Acts chapter 2 because all these scattered Jews had come back for the time of Pentecost and the message needed to be communicated to them in their varying languages. So there were myriads of Jews in the diaspora.

Now which of them does James have in mind? First he's writing to Jews, the twelve tribes. Secondly he's writing to scattered Jews outside the land of Palestine. Which ones? Which ones?

He doesn't say here. He doesn't say. Before we go on to identify further into the epistle where I think he does say, let me say this as a footnote. The dispersion of the Jews turned out to be the greatest expeditor of Gentile evangelism. The fact that there were Jews all over the Mediterranean world created the pattern of Pauline evangelism to Gentiles. Why? When Paul went into cities, where's the first place he went? Synagogue. The fact that there was a resident Jewish population, God allowed these Jews to be scattered everywhere then sent a Jew out to evangelize Gentiles, and so that he wouldn't do it alone, he went first to the synagogue, endeavored to win a group of Jews to Christ and then he wouldn't be alone anymore but together they could evangelize the Gentiles. He also knew that if he went to the Gentiles first and offered the gospel to them first, the Jews would never accept him because they would think he brought a Gentile religion. So God allowed the dispersion to create the soil in which world evangelism could begin. So they were scattered seed to grow into a future harvest. Evangelism started through the Jews of the dispersion.

Now back to the question. Which of the scattered Jews is James addressing? Well we have to understand that he calls them "brethren," in verse 2, "My brethren." He refers to "brother" in verse 9. This seems to be something that's very much an identifier. In verse 1 of chapter 2, "My brethren." He refers to "brother and sister" in chapter 2 verse 15. Chapter 3, "My brethren." He calls them "beloved brethren." It's very clear from the references that he makes that he is speaking to Christian Jews who were scattered, okay? So he's writing to scattered and already exposed to the gospel and believing Jews. I think really the same audience to which 1 Peter is addressed, and you can note that in 1 Peter 1:1 and 2.

Now how did they get scattered? Let me tell you how they got scattered. These Jews were scattered really by the persecution that began in Acts, and let's go back and see it. Back into the book of Acts. We have to understand this so we understand their mindset. They had come to believe the gospel. Perhaps they were converted on the day of Pentecost. Perhaps they were converted a little while after, by the time you come to the beginning of chapter 4 there were at least 20,000 men in the church and that means there were probably that many women or more. And so there could have been upwards of 50,000 believers. It's hard to understand just exactly how many. We can assume 20,000, maybe even more. It says 5,000 men in chapter 4 verse 4 and it isn't long after that as it explodes that by the time you come to...I really meant chapter 5 verse 28...it says, "You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." So first you have the three and then it begins to explode and you have 5,000 more added and now you've got the women added to that so I say it's readily 20,000. And then you've got that exploding into chapter 5, the church is growing very fast. And when you come to chapter 7 you come to the first martyr, Stephen. He dies for the faith of Christ. You come into chapter 8 and off of the death of Stephen comes a wave of persecution under a man named Saul. In chapter 8 verse 1, Saul was consenting to Stephen's death and at that time there was a great persecution. And notice this, "And they were all scattered abroad, throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

It was persecution then that scattered these Christian Jews who were a part of the church of Jerusalem. The scattered Jewish Christians were James' audience, the people who had left Jerusalem for their faith in Christ under persecution. And I simply remind you of what I told you this morning that Satan goes after the church, he goes after the church.

He attacks the church. He makes every attempt to kill the church. Jesus said in John 15 that you're going to expect to get precisely and exactly what the world gave to Me. Do you remember how that fifteenth chapter says in verse 18? "If the world hate you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world the world would love its own but because you're not of the world I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you." In chapter 16 He says, "You will be put out of the synagogue. The time comes that whoever kills you will think he does God's service." He said, you can expect it, it's going to come, it is absolutely inevitable. To the Ephesian leaders he said, "Look, I know that when I leave you're going to get attacked from the outside and perverse men are going to rise

from the inside. First Corinthians 16 promises the same attack. Second Corinthians 2, Ephesians 6, 2 Timothy 1, James 4, 1 Peter 2, I mean it's just part of the pattern. Revelation 2 and 3, read that. It shows how Satan attacks the church so many ways through the loss of first love, compromise with the world, tolerance of sin, contentment with programs, spiritual deadness, lukewarm, all those kinds of things and even through persecution as he attacked the church in chapter 2 of Revelation. I love that little church in chapter 2 it says about them in verse 9, the church at Smyrna, "I know thy works and tribulation and poverty, thou art rich, and I know the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews and are not but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which you shall suffer." He persecutes the church. He attacks the church, and he attacked that early church. Satan moved against that church because it was moving with power, it was filling Jerusalem with its doctrine. And Lucifer the fallen angel who tempted Eve, who tempted Christ, who perverts God's Word, who opposes God's work, Lucifer, that fallen angel, who hinders God's servants, who counterfeits the truth, who lies, who snares the wicked, who controls nations, who holds the world in his own lap, that murdering liar seeks, of course, to silence the church.

So the persecution came and these dear saints were scattered everywhere...everywhere. And it is to them that James writes. They knew some things. They knew persecution. They were in it again, the assumption of James as they were going through trials, chapter 1 deals with the fact that he assumes them to be in trials. In verse 2 he says, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials." The church runs from Jerusalem runs right into somewhere else and they're going to have conflict everywhere because the system is the same and the attacker is ever present. These persecuted, scattered Christian Jews are out there facing the attack of Satan again.

I told you last time that that probably occurred maybe around 35 to 37 A.D., not long after the death of Christ and His resurrection. That persecution broke out and they were scattered. By now they've had a chance to settle and little churches have grown up and communities of believers are there. And James takes it on his own heart, because they're really part of his congregation who've gone out, to write them. And he is primarily concerned that they have a true saving faith, that they really know the Lord. And so he gives them a series of tests and those tests are the basic structure of this great epistle.

He starts the letter by saying this in verse 1, "Greeting...greeting," you know what that means? Be glad, rejoice, kairo, be glad, a common secular greeting used very frequently. But what he is going to give them should gladden their hearts because it should verify the genuineness of their salvation.

Now listen, don't misunderstand me, James knows that salvation is by electing grace. He knows that. He says that in chapter 2 verse 5, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom which He promised to them that love Him?" He knows salvation is of electing grace. He knows salvation brings imputed righteousness. Chapter 2 verse 23, "Abraham believed God, it was imputed to him for righteousness." What I'm saying to you is he knows that salvation is a

divine act of sovereign God through sovereign grace. He knows that. But he also knows that that sovereign act of God and that divine grace will always be verified by a transformed life. And so he offers tests to see the validity of saving faith.

And I would say to you that any pastor needs to do this. I want you to remember something, only a few of you will remember it cause only a few of you were here. In fact, I don't know if anybody in this congregation was here the first week I was here, anybody here the first week I came to Grace Church? Oh, a few people, wonderful, all these years, thank you. Do you know what I preached on the first time I was here? I preached on Matthew 7:21 to 23, first time. And I remember preaching and saying, I don't want anyone to be in this church and think they're a Christian and they're not. And I remember before all the fluff of that first sermon was over, two of the leaders of this church, prominent in church leadership, confessed the reality of non-saving faith, knew they weren't Christians and instead of coming to true faith, left. Some non-Christians in the choir left and some others came to true faith. I simply tell you that to say, "Look, when James takes his first shot at his scattered flock, what he is concerned about is the genuineness of their faith." And so he gives them tests to measure it.

Test number one, let's just get an overview. Test number one, the test of perseverance in suffering, the test of perseverance in suffering. Verse 2, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials knowing this that the trial of your faith, or the testing of it, works patience and let patience have her perfect work that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. If you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally and holds back nothing and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed, for let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways, let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted but the rich in that he is made low because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away, for the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat but it withers the grass and its flower falleth and the grace of the fashion of it perishes, so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways."

What he's saying is don't put your salvation on the basis of your money, whether you have it or don't have it. Don't think you have true faith if you have wavering faith. Don't think you have true faith if you're double minded. Verse 12 is the key, "Truly blessed, truly saved is the man that endures through the trial." The trial doesn't blow him away, "For when he is tried he receives the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." That's the reward of true salvation for the one whose faith is true as demonstrated by the way he endured the trial.

Do you remember the seed sown in the rocky soil? When the tribulation came, when the trial came and the sun came out and the sun of trial scorched, it dried up and died because there was no what? no root. What happens to a person during trials in life is a test whether they have living faith. Put someone through a test, someone through a trial, if he's a believer he counts it all what? joy. He

perseveres and he comes out strong and victorious. But if he wavers and wanders and abandons, mark it, if he withers and dies, not true faith. Perseverance is a sign of saving faith, perseverance in trial.

Now all the details of that passage I'm going to explain to you as we start into it next week, I just want to give you the overview. That's a test. That's a test. And if you have faith, it will perfect your faith. If you don't have saving faith, it will reveal it. I have never yet met a person with non-saving faith, a non-Christian who wants to stick around when the furnace is turned up. They're gone.

Second test, this is so critical, the test of blame in temptation...the test of blame in temptation. Verse 13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, “I am what? tempted by God." Now why would anybody say that? I'll tell you why they'd say that, because they do not want to accept the responsibility for their sin. And so here you have the person who has false faith demonstrated by the fact that they will not accept the responsibility for their sin. God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man, for every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. And in verse 16 he says, "Don't you error about that." The only thing that comes from God, look at it in verse 17, is a what? a good and perfect gift. False faith has problems and inevitably...Well, it's God's fault it's God's fault.

You remember Eve? What did she say when confronted with her sin? I'm sorry, when Adam was confronted with his sin, what did he say about Eve? He said to God, "The woman You gave me." Who did he blame? Not Eve, the woman it's not my fault, God, I woke up one morning married. You could have created anything You wanted, why her? Don't blame me. That is the typical temptation of false faith and it's where it reveals itself. That's why Joshua 7:19 says, "Confess your sin and give glory to God." Acknowledge the responsibility so that when God punishes you He has the freedom from being reproached for an unjust punishment because you've just confessed that you deserve it. The test of blame in temptation.

You mark it. True faith accepts the responsibility for sin. And it sees sin as the fruit of lust and it says, "Hey, my sin is not God's fault, it's not my circumstances, it's not my deprivation, it's not because God made me a certain way, it's not God that created my problem. The only thing that comes down from God is every good and perfect gift." Sin doesn't come down from God, it comes up from me and the test of blame in temptation is a good test of true faith. You show me the true believer and I'll show you the one beating on his breast acknowledging his own sin.

Third test is the test of response to the Word. How a person responds to the Word is an indicator of the genuineness of their faith. And starting in verse 19 and going all the way to verse 27 he covers that, I don't want to read it all because of time but in verse 19 he says, "Brethren, be swift to hear and slow to speak and slow to wrath," and he talks about the wrath of God, he talks about putting away filthiness and overflowing wickedness. And then he says, "Receive with meekness the engrafted

Word which is able to what? save your soul." Now how you receive the Word is an indicator of whether you are genuine. Verse 22, "Be doers of the Word and not what? hearers only because if you're a hearer only you're doing...what?...deceiving yourself." The Word of truth, it's called the Word of truth in verse 18, when received properly into the heart with meekness in a life where filthiness and wickedness has been put away, brings salvation, the new birth by that incorruptible seed which is the Word of God, Peter says. And that person becomes a doer of the Word and not a hearer only. And a doer is one who really understands. He's not forgetful, verse 25 says. He looks and he sees and he does and he's blessed. And his religion is manifest in purity in an undefiled way and in loving kindness to the fatherless and widows in their affliction and he keeps himself unspotted from the world because that's what the Bible calls him to.

May I say to you that God is not looking for isolated acts of goodness, He's looking for obedience as a pattern of life? The test of trials and the test of blame in temptation and the test of response to the Word, these are how you measure living faith.

There's a fourth test, chapter 2, and that's the test of impartial love. "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory with respect of persons. If there comes to your assembly a man with a gold ring and fine clothes and comes in a man who is poor and wears filthy garments, and you have respect, or you give honor to the one that wears the fine clothes and say to him, `Sit here in a good place,' and say to the poor, `Stand over there, or sit under my footstool,'" literally he doesn't mean under, sit by my footstool, get down by my feet out of sight, don't let anybody know you're here. If you do that, "You are partial and you are judges with evil thoughts and don't you know that God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith," and so forth, "but you've despised the poor," he says in verse 6. "And have you forgotten that rich men oppress you and draw you before the judgment seats, do you not blaspheme that worthy name by which you are called? If you fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You do well. But if you have respect of persons, you commit sin. You're convicted of the law as transgressors and whoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point is guilty of all. Do not commit adultery and do not kill and the law says if you commit no adultery yet if you kill you become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." And then he says in verse 13, "If you don't show mercy to someone else, God's going to show no mercy to you."

Wow! You know what he's saying? If you're not a merciful person, you're not going to receive mercy from God. That's to say that how I treat other people is a mark of my love which is a mark of my salvation.

Now listen, you say, "Boy oh boy, sometimes I probably fail in a test. Boy, sometimes I might blame God for a sin. Sometimes I might not respond to the Word. Sometimes I might not love as I ought to love and hold people equal whether they're rich or poor. Am I lost and on my way to hell?" What I'm saying to you, beloved, is this is to be the direction of your life, it will not be the perfection of it. But it

will be the direction of it. And I've asked you this question before...hey, just ask yourself, is this the deepest truest longing of my heart? That's where the verification takes place.

The test of impartial love is followed by the test of righteous works, the test of righteous deeds, chapter 2 verse 14. And he goes all the way down to the end of the chapter. And what does he say three times? "Faith without works is what? is dead." That's test number five. Faith without works is dead. We've just gone through that in our study of that passage, the test of righteous works.

Let's go to chapter 3. Here’s one, the test of the tongue...the test of the tongue. This is God saying, "Say ah." This is a health test. Stick your tongue out and say "Ah" and let me check your spirituality. Living faith produces self-control and self-control is revealed in the tongue, in the tongue. Ugly speech comes from an ugly heart. Unloving speech comes from a heart where the love of Christ is a stranger. Figs must come from fig trees, grapes must come from vines, olives have to come from olive trees, salt water has a salt water source, sweet water has a sweet water source, bitter words come from a bitter heart that's his argument all the way through down to verse 12. It's the test of speech. What's your speech? I don't mean what's your speech around the church; I mean what's your speech when you're not around the church? How do you do with the test of speech?

You say, "Sometimes I fail but the deepest desire of my heart and the direction of my life is godly speech." That's the test.

Then in chapter 3 verse 13 we come to the test of humble wisdom, the test of humble wisdom. "Who is a wise man, who truly has the wisdom of God, who truly is endued with the knowledge? Let him show it out of a good life with meekness of wisdom." Works with meekness of wisdom. The test of humble wisdom as opposed to bitter, envying, strife, lying. That stuff is earthly, sensual, demoniacal. It's confusion, it's every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is pure and peaceable and gentle and easy to be entreated and full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. He's really summing up some of the things he said before, isn't he? See, this is the test of humble wisdom. "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by them that make peace." Let me tell you what humble wisdom is. It's really being a peacemaker.

Now, I haven't said it yet but I'm going to say it now. Can you feel the Beatitudes behind this what I told you last week? It's almost as if he's coming off the Sermon on the Mount and explaining and applying some of it. The test of humble wisdom. What's your life like? Is it earthly? Is it sensual? Is it filled with strife and bitter envy and self-glory and lying against the truth? You failed the test...the test of humble wisdom. Or do you have that wisdom that can bring to a situation peace and gentleness and mercy and good fruits and honesty and righteousness? This is the wisdom that is peaceful and peace producing.

There's an eighth test and we're going to look at all these in detail, there's an eighth test in chapter 4, the test of worldly indulgence...the test of worldly indulgence. The first twelve verses deal with it, I'm just going to point you to verse 4. "You adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." The self-love, the self-fulfillment, the self-esteem of the world at the expense of others, the world's lustful, sinful, selfish, indulgent system is antithetical to God. It does not mark saving faith. That lusting desire is mentioned in the first three verses. That is not saving faith, not at all.

It goes on to talk about humility. And then in verses 11 and 12 says that God is the one who will judge God is the one who will judge.

So you look at your heart and you say, "Do I love the world and the things that are in the world like 1 John 2 says? If I do, the love of the Father is not in me. If I am a friend of the world then I'm the enemy of God." That's the test of worldly indulgence. What are your pursuits? Are you pursuing the Kingdom of God or the things of the world?

And then, if I may, at the end of chapter 4 can I draw you to what I call the test of dependence the test of dependence? Do you really believe God is sovereign? Do you really submit your life to God? Or do you go through life saying, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain? Hey, we're in control of this whole deal. We go wherever we want, we do what we want, we buy what we want, we make whatever deals we want to make, we're in charge."

Hey, verse 14, "You don't know what's going to be on the next day. What is your life anyway? It is a vapor that appears for a little time, vanishes away. You ought to say, and here is the test of dependence, “If the Lord will." Underline that, that's the way you ought to live your whole life, that's the mark of living faith. "If the Lord will we will live, we'll do" You say, "What does that mean?" Hey, that is simply a life under the sovereignty of God. And don't go around rejoicing in your own boastings. Living faith is dependent faith. And if you don't live this way, verse 17 says, it's sin, it's sin. The test of dependence. Oh what a very, very important test.

What have we seen? The test of perseverance and suffering, the test of blame in temptation, the test of response to the Word, the test of impartial love, the test of righteous works, the test of the tongue, the test of humble wisdom, the test of worldly indulgence, the test of dependence, let's look at chapter 5. The test of patience, patient endurance, patient endurance. And that really flows from chapter 5 verse 1 down through verse 11.

He indicts the rich in verses 1 to 6 for condemning the poor. And he says, in effect, verse 7, "Don't react wrong to that. If you're oppressed, if you're persecuted, be patient and just wait for what great event? the coming of the Lord." You know what a mark of living faith is? Hey, you can persecute me,

you can hit me, you can knock me from pillar to post, you can say all manner of evil against me, I just want you to know that I am waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ and because my heart is filled with that hope, I really don't care what happens here. Right? That's the essence of it.

And then he gives the illustration of the farmer in verses 7 and 8, it has to plant and then wait. He gives the illustration of the prophets that have to speak and then wait. Then he gives the illustration of Job who had to wait to see the mercy of God.

Another test of living faith is the no-panic approach to life. The approach to life that says, "If it all comes crumbling down around me, it's okay because I'm waiting for eternity." Boy, some people can't live like that cause it's all here and now, man, this is it.

Then I think he slides one in on verse 12 called the truth test the test of truthfulness. "But above all things, my brethren, swear not neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath but let your yea be yea, your nay, nay lest you fall into condemnation." That's the test of truthfulness. Boy, let me away from people who say to me things that aren't true but have their fingers crossed behind their backs. The Jews had developed an entire system of lying based on oaths. And they said, "Well if you say this oath, you have to tell the truth. If you say this oath, you can lie because this oath isn't binding." We went through that, didn't we, on the Sermon on the Mount. He says "Just say it yes, just say it no, and that's it. And if you don't, you're going to fall into condemnation." It's a test of truthfulness the test of truthfulness.

And then finally, the test of prayerfulness. Verse 13 on to the end...actually down to verse 18, "Any among you afflicted, pray. Any sick, let the elders pray." Verse 15, "The prayer of faith verse 16, confess your faults and pray. Elijah was a man like you, verse 17, he prayed." Verse 18, "He prayed again." It's the test of prayerfulness.

I remember long ago in my life reading an interesting article about prayer and it stuck with me all through the years. Prayer is like breathing for a Christian. You can't keep from doing it. Have you noticed that? You breathe not because you think, “I've got to breathe, let me see, if I forget to breathe I'll die, so I have got to, I've got to remember so I'm going to write on my finger breathe." You don't have to do that. The reason you don't have to do that is because there's air pressure and the air pressure is exerted on your lungs and it forces you to breathe. In fact, the very most difficult thing to do is to hold your breath, right? After a while you, you gasp and you breathe because of the pressure that builds up.

That's what prayer is. You show me true faith and I'll show you prayer. It's the link with life. It's the dependence. We live in a God-designed supernatural environment, the very presence of God exerts pressure on our spiritual lungs and we have to pray. No one has to remind us. We should pray more than we ought to, more than we do, we ought to pray more than we do. But prayer is a part of our life.

Now you see the tests are all here. And in the end, he says as I said, in verses 19 and 20, if you find somebody who doesn't pass the test, convert them and you'll save a sinner from death and you'll bring to him forgiveness.

Now, beloved, may I say this in closing, just this overview? If you don't pass the test you're either not a Christian at all, or you're in a time of disobedience in your life, somehow you've gotten off the course. And may God help you in either case.

A poet wrote this: "We are saved by faith, yet faith is one with life like daylight and the sun. Unless they flower in our deeds, dead, empty husks are all our creeds." It's true. "To call Christ Lord but strive not to obey belies the words of homage that I pay."

The Lord is going to show us all through this the nature of living faith and I'm excited what He's going to teach me and you as well. Let's bow in prayer.

Lord, this has been a difficult day in many ways and I confess from my own heart that this has been a hard time for us to focus clearly with all that's been going on. I think even now of Fred and Gary, our beloved co-pastors, behind the Iron Curtain, they're away from us. Jay's away from us and others of our staff, and Clayton's been gone. It seemed as though things aren't just the way they should be or normally are with these men gone. And, Lord, in some ways we have realized again how much we need them. But, Lord, in spite of this and in spite of all the attacks and all the whirlwind of things trying to distract me and all of us, we just offer You this day as our humble best, asking that in some way You would forgive us for the failures and receive that good thing we bring. We do not want to sin as Israel of old sinned and bring You the lame and the blind and the halt and the maimed, we want to bring you the best of our offering, the best of our songs, the best of our sermons, the best of our lessons, the best of our relationships, the best of our fellowship, the best of everything that we have from the depths of our hearts we want to offer to You. And we pray, Lord, that what we have offered in our humble way this day would be pleasing. And we desire, Lord, that that which we have heard from You and that which we have had ingrained into our hearts through Your Spirit in the worship hour this morning and in the time of the study of Your Word tonight might find expression in our lives.

We want to be different. We want to be all that You would have us to be. Bind our hearts closer together than ever we have been in the past. Protect us from the evil one, O God, and may we have greater courage than we've ever had. I am reminded so much all week long of Acts chapter 4 and how when the apostles were persecuted they gathered together and first counted themselves worthy...unworthy to be so worthy as to suffer for the name of Christ. And then they rejoiced and then they prayed for strength and then they asked for greater courage. Lord, help us not to retreat in any way but help us to embrace one another with a new found strength in unity, help us to recommit ourselves to the task, help us having identified the enemy to know where the battle lies. Give us

greater courage than ever.

And, Lord, I would pray also tonight for this matter of living faith, that each of us in this place might possess that true living faith and that not only might we possess it but might we express it so that it is the direction of our lives, so that we are known as those people who fulfill these tests, those people who persevere in trials, those people who understand their own sinfulness and Your absolute and utter holiness, those people who are doers of the Word, those people who are lovers of God and not the world, those people who have no respect of persons, those people whose tongue is under control, whose wisdom is heavenly, whose speech is honest and truthful, whose lives are marked by prayer. And, Lord, help us too as James enjoins us to find some in our midst perhaps who have erred and to convert them to the truth by Your grace. Thank You for our fellowship tonight. We bless Your name for the Savior's sake. Amen.

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