



CAPITOL COMMISSION

TO: *LEGISLATORS / SPOUSES*
FROM: *DAN FILE*
DATE: *JANUARY 19, 2010*

COLORADO

James 1-2:13 Review

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We have come along way in James and still have a long way to go. James is continuing to show us that if our faith in Jesus Christ is true and genuine then it will become evident by how we live. It matter how we live! Let's look back and see what James has shown us over the past two years before we look into what he has for us this 2010 Legislative Session. So far we have seen how true faith endures trials, James 1:2-12; how true faith does not fall in to temptations, James 1:13-18; how true faith is a doer of the Word, James 1:19-27; and how true faith does not show partiality but love, James 2:1-13. This session we will start by looking at how true faith produces good works, James 2:14-26.

I. WHAT IS THE THEME OF JAMES?

What is true faith? How would you answer that question? James wrote this book to challenge the Jewish Christians and all believers to examine their faith to see if it is a genuine, saving faith. James answers the question of what is true faith! James is very practical. **It doesn't teach us how to be saved, but rather how to live when we are saved for it matters how we live.** James relates everything he writes to true faith and how it works.

II. JAMES 1:2-12: TRUE FAITH ENDURES TO MATURITY

James 1:2-12 reminded us that true faith endures to maturity through any kind of trials and testing that will come our way. Surrendering to the testing God brings leads us to the perfecting work He accomplishes in our lives resulting in maturity and becoming like Christ. We are tried as metal is by fire and purified, thus approved. The approving process, the refining process, the purifying work is the testing of our faith. This refinement, then, reveals our approval, reveals pure silver and the approval God gives brings the crown of life, which is eternal life. As we persevere through trials to maturity, our faith is proof that we love God.

In this book we are challenged to count it all joy. That joy results from confidence and peace in God's sovereignty, as we look down the road of our life to the end result of maturity and ultimately being with Christ eternally. We are to count it joy when we encounter many, varied kinds of trials which are brought by God, knowing that the test by which our faith is proven produces a cheerful hopeful endurance that submits to God and remains under the trial. We must *let* this endurance have its intended result of bringing about obedience to Christ, maturity, wholeness and completeness where we lack nothing of spiritual importance or value.

III. JAMES 1:13-18: TRUE FAITH DOES NOT GIVE IN TO TEMPTATION

Now James directs our focus from the outward trials to the inward temptations to sin. Temptations can bring about sin and death instead of eternal life. One we are to *endure through* and the other we are *never to give in to* because it is sin. Satan *tempts* us to sin which destroys. God *tests* to build character and maturity which results in pure silver useful for the Lord's work. Both are a matter of choice. Both require God's wisdom and God will provide His way of escape through both, but one is God's way and one is man's way. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

John MacArthur lays out this process of temptation in his James Bible Commentary, pages 52-54. *The first step is desire.* It might start as an emotional feeling, a longing, wanting to acquire, achieve or possess something we don't have. That desire begins to grab our attention. *It's then followed by deception* where we begin to rationalize and make justification for getting or doing what is desired. We make excuses and find ourselves trying to figure out a way to obtain whatever it is. There is a lure to give into it. At this point James says, *"lust has conceived"* and our sin has started the process of forming, growing. *The next step is design.* We make plans on how to fulfill our emotional desire that has come through deception, enticement and luring. Now we pursue the lust until we are satisfied by the lust, the bait, the lure. And we don't see the hook, the trap. The temptation doesn't appear to be all that bad. The bait keeps us from seeing the consequences and judgment of our sin. *The final step is disobedience.* We act on our design and carry out the evil, the sin, the lust. We have taken the bait and are trapped. It's more than a thought; it becomes an action...sin. We are hanging on the hook and James says *"it gives birth to sin."* We have acted in disobedience and sinned against God. And who is responsible? Not God and not even Satan. Only the person walking through the steps sinned, and that's you and I.

The solution for not yielding to sin in our lives is found in a close relationship with Jesus Christ and submitted to the Word of God to the point that we actually respond to God's Word with obedience and godliness.

A. JAMES 1:18: TRUE FAITH IS BROUGHT FORTH BY THE WORD OF TRUTH

God deliberately and specifically exercised His volition, His preference and His power; to make a decision to draw us to Himself by the Word of truth! As believers, we are *"brought forth"*, we are born spiritually and given true faith by God's will through the regenerating power of His Word.

God's Word is the authoritative truth. It is the authoritative, reliable, trustworthy, dependable, solid, inerrant, never changing but life changing Word of God! It is the "power of God for salvation" from Romans 1:16. It is the "incorruptible seed" of 1 Peter 1:23, "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God." It remains forever as Isaiah 40:8 says, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever." By the Word of God we can be saved from sin and by the Word of God we can be kept from sin, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word." Psalm 119:9. It is what we are to believe and receive as the Thessalonians did and were commended by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." And in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we learn that, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." And because God's Word is able to give all men wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ, because obedience to God's Word can keep us from falling into temptation and sin, because God's Word is profitable in every sense for our lives...that is what we are called to proclaim and preach! "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word..." (2 Timothy 4:1-2) Do we hunger and desire for time in His Word? Does our heart ache to be nourished by His life changing truth? That's how we will grow, mature and become as pure silver refined!

IV. TRUE FAITH RECEIVES GOD'S WORD AND IS A "DOER OF THE WORD" - JAMES 1:19-27

The true believer will listen quickly and eagerly to God's Word willing to submit and obey it. The true believer will be just as slow to speak the Word and will only do so when he/she is prepared to handle it accurately. And one with true faith will not be hostile to the Word of God but will give way to God's work in their life. These verses reveal the contrast of receiving the Word and resisting the Word. Which example shows the habit of your life?

James says that we are to receive the Word of God with holiness by putting aside *all* filthiness which are sinful actions as well as *all* wickedness which are evil, sinful intents or desires. We are to put these away because sin is not pleasing to God and is a serious barrier to hearing and comprehending God's Word just as dirty earwax can hinder our hearing. We are to receive the Word with purity and holiness, dealing with the sin in our lives by putting away all evil actions and desires.

A. HEARING & DOING THE WORD – JAMES 1:22

James goes on to say that those who hear the Word only delude themselves. Any response to God's Word other than obedience is a serious error. It is not enough to sit and hear the Word of God and have little or no reaction to

what has been heard. You will identify with the choice of words James uses.

"hearer" Greek word "*akroates*," means to merely listen, used of people who sit passively in an audience and listens to a singer or speaker and have no reaction to what is heard. Today it could be used of those who audit a college class which they are required to attend and presumably listen to, but for which they are not required to do outside study, write papers or take any tests.¹

Maybe you have audited a class before, because it is way cheaper to do so. You go to class and hear the lectures but you don't have to do any of the assignments. There are many who think they can "audit" Christianity, sitting in the pews and hearing God's Word without any response. And any response other than obedience is deception. Those hearers James says have "deluded themselves". Again, obedience is the dividing line between any who would call themselves believers and those who truly are. The mark of a true believer is obedience to the Word of God. If we think we can hear and not obey, then we have deceived ourselves, having no one else to blame for our deliberate and false reasoning. It is like dying of hunger with bread in your hands. Don't be deceived by letting God's Word go in one ear and out the other. It is not enough to just hear it, you must do it.

B. LOOKS & FORGETS WHAT HE SEES – JAMES 1:23-24

In James 1:23-24, we have the example of one man who observes his face in a mirror and goes away, forgetting what he looks like. James will contrast this in the next verse with a man who observes the Word, perseveres by it, remembers it, and acts on it. That man is truly blessed. The former is deluded and is merely auditing Christianity, being a forgetful hearer only and not a doer of the Word. That man is deceived about the genuineness of his faith and is not blessed

Examine your life. What is your response to the Word of God? Does it convict in areas you would rather leave alone? Does it reveal light in areas you would rather keep secret and dark? Does it make you uncomfortable in the pew? Submit to it allowing the beautiful conviction of the Word to bring about maturity. Let the mirror of God's Word do its effectual work and bring about godliness in your life!

B. BLESSED BY THE WORD OF GOD – JAMES 1:25

In James 1:25 this man looks humbly, intently and diligently at the perfect law of God which is His Word and gives way to the Word in his life. In James 1:17, this word refers to the "*perfect gift*", which comes from the Father. It is that which fully meets the needs of a person. In James 1:4, the word is used "*let endurance have its perfect result*", which refers to not lacking in

anything whatsoever. God's Word will completely meet our needs with absolute sufficiency, for it is not lacking in anyway.

The one who abides under the careful work of the Word of God and obeys it will be blessed, fully satisfied by God Himself. Keep in mind that the blessing comes not in the hearing, but in the doing! Receiving and responding to the Word of God is a lifestyle that will characterize all true believers.

C. A VAIN FAITH, WORTHLESS RELIGION, THE UNBRIDLED TONGUE – JAMES 1:26-27

Why does James single out the tongue as an indicator of our heart and the genuineness of our faith? Why does James indicate that an out of control tongue reveals phony, religious devotion? Why does James make the point that if you say you love God, but don't bridle your tongue, your religion is useless? James gives us a word picture to clarify this critical point.

"bridle" Greek word **"chalinagoeo,"** which is a bridle. More specifically, the Greek word **"ago"** means to direct or restrain, govern, control or lead with a bridle.

James compares the tongue to a bridle used on a wild horse. You can take a wild horse and with time and patience, gain control over that horse with a mere bit and bridle in its mouth. You would be foolish to try and control it without a bridle and you would quickly find your horse out of control and yourself on the ground. And James would make the point that if you can't control that horse with a bridle, you are deceiving yourself into thinking he is broke. And so it is with true faith. A person who is outwardly religious and yet has a tongue that is unbridled and out of control, demonstrates a heart that is not controlled by the Spirit of God. Our tongue gives an outward picture of our heart. What picture is revealed by your tongue not just to a watching world, but to God as well?

V. TRUE FAITH DOES NOT SHOW PARTIALITY BUT LOVE - JAMES 2:1-13

True faith responds with love to those in need. And now in James 2, we will see that true faith is revealed in a life that does not show partiality or favoritism because true faith will show love to all those in need and is no respecter of persons. If we say we possess the love of God, our response to those in need should be consistent with God's response to them. True faith progresses on to maturity by hearing the Word, receiving the Word and responding to the Word of God.

True faith shows love and not partiality because that goes against the very character of God. If we say we are a true believer then our response to those in need should be consistent with God's response to us. Romans 2:11 states

clearly, *"For there is no partiality with God."* As we grow in our faith with the pursuit of becoming like Christ, we will show no partiality toward others.

A. TRUE FAITH FULFILLS THE ROYAL LAW – JAMES 2:8A

James is concerned with people in the church evaluating others from the world's perspective of riches, rather than God's perspective of showing no preference. But what does the royal law have to do with showing partiality? First let's understand what the *"royal law"* is.

The *"royal law"* was rooted in the Old Testament as evidenced in Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5. And Jesus taught His disciples about the *"royal law"* in Matthew 22:37-40 where He says, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."* This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* On these two commandments depend the whole Law and Prophets." Jesus stated that the whole of moral duty to God hangs on these two things; our love for God and our love for our neighbor. This is the *"royal law"* that James refers to.

B. TRUE FAITH SHOWS LOVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOR – JAMES 2:8B

James specifically directs our attention to *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* If we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, that would mean that we are concerned with others needs just as much as we are concerned for our own needs.

Who is my neighbor?

"neighbor" Greek word **"plesion,"** meaning a fellow man, any other member of the human family. A neighbor is anyone laying in the path of our life that has a need.

This is any person who has a need that we can meet.ⁱⁱ Anyone who crosses our path in life that has a need is my neighbor. The Scriptural reference is of course the Good Samaritan of Luke 10:30-37. We are to meet the needs of another just as we would meet our own need. If we do, then we will not show partiality to anyone.

C. IF YOU HAVE TRUE FAITH...SHOW MERCY – JAMES 2:12-13

James reminds us that if we have lived a life showing no mercy, no compassion, no love and yet showing partiality to our neighbor, then in God's judgment of us, we will be shown no mercy as well.

In contrast to the one who shows no mercy, the one whose life is characterized by mercy, will triumph over judgment because they have a

transformed life which clearly reveals a true and genuine faith. The mercy a man has shown others as fruit of a life touched by God's saving mercy will triumph over judgment.ⁱⁱⁱ

VI. LET'S SUM UP JAMES - JAMES 1:1-2:1-13

James calls us to examine our lives. How do you respond to trials? How do you respond to temptation? How do you respond to the Word of God? In chapter 2, James asks you to evaluate your life. Is your life characterized by showing favoritism? Are you merciful and compassionate to your neighbor, those in need? The depth of our love for our neighbor has a direct correlation to the depth of our love for Jesus Christ. To show favoritism to others is totally against the very nature and character of God. We are called to love the Lord God with all our heart, soul, mind and then secondly to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Our neighbor is anyone God puts in our path that has a need. James shows that just as those who love their neighbor as themselves fulfill the royal law and reveals a true and genuine faith, so conversely the one who shows partiality habitually, demonstrates their lack of love and gives evidence of a faith that is not genuine. This is serious and James does not deal with it lightly. If this sin of partiality is habitual in our lives, there is reason to conclude that we may not be a true believer in Jesus Christ. Redemption will always bring about obedient living, even though there will be times of disobedience.

Examine your life. Look inside your own heart. First, do you have a true love for Jesus Christ? Do you love Him with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind? And second, do you have a true and genuine love for your neighbor? Is that demonstrated by more than words? Are you merciful and compassionate to all those in need? Do you exemplify the character of Christ with impartiality? Are these traits the habit of your life? Does your life demonstrate a real and genuine faith?

Examine your life.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

ⁱⁱ Hughes, R. Kent, James, Faith That Works, Crossway Books, Good News Publisher: Wheaton, Illinois. Pg. 99.

ⁱⁱⁱ MacArthur, John, MacArthur Commentary on James. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg. 117.