


ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION

JAMES

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CHAPTER 1

With diffidence one parts from *Matthew Henry's* good company as to the authorship of this letter. The writer is not, I think, James son of Alphaeus, cousin germane to the Lord but rather James the Just, brother of the Lord. He sends his letter to the dispersed Jews enveloped in the warm concepts of the **CHRIST LIKE** lived in unity and **BROTHERHOOD** (*used 12 times in address*) throughout distant colonisations of newborn Christians.

James is the brother who was at the Galilean Bethel in Nazareth stayed not overnight but for well nigh 30 years, cheek by jowl with Jesus. This is James who also had his Peniel as recorded in 1Corinthians 15.7 following the appearance of the LORD to the disciples in Galilee in midweek prior to the second Sunday after His resurrection.

The reader is made aware of austere circumstances in Judea against which epistle is written – the growing anger of zealots, famine and consequential poverty (*cf. Acts 11.28-9*) and one cannot fail to be impressed by the manner in which Jacobus directs us to the “mind of Christ” in every stroke. James paints **CHRIST LIKENESS** in high definition not with a broad brush. He introduces his epistle general notably with the “joy” of Jesus in a troubled world, with reference to His “wisdom”, to His “humility”, to His “impeccability”, to His original statements – as that re “the crown of life” cf. v12 and Revelation 2.10. The letter I believe to have been written amid brewing troubles suggesting a 45AD date)

UNION WITH CHRIST (1) 2

Reckon it **all joy, MY BROTHERS**, when you **fall into** trials. *Joseph rose again to lead his family in Egypt and by a noble loving heart and iron faith he surmounted famine in that land and thus the bond between the Vizier and his brothers gave rise to earliest biblical concept of brotherhood. After the cross an identical deep two-way commitment of most genuine affection emerged between Jacobus and his risen Lord and brother. This translated into the assemblies of the early church and is patent and luminous in the letter.* The note of joy is the first Jacobus strikes and this reflects the resurrection appearance and unadulterated joy of brotherhood with Jesus that pulsates in the letter. Grounded so in the love that surmounted tribulation of soul in the life and death of Christ, James is uniquely placed to speak of every hue of life's trials. He immediately faces the disturbed world of trouble and anguish and speaks of “falling into trial”. The term in the original for “**fall into**” *περιπιπτω* relates to the suddenness of “**shipping disaster**” – a potential sinking. Jesus was asleep on one such occasion and woke to the amazement of all to assume total control of wind and wave. Also on another occasion of jeopardy He came alongside and was esteemed a phantom. In a third grave over lading crisis He brought the ships heavy with fish safe to land. James drawing lessons about *the sudden squalls of testing* and the unfailing Christ developing the **patience** of disciples *υπομονη* – enduring in the face of blows, pain of mind and allowing God to produce in us the refinement that comes of trial and the willingness to wager all and continue with joy – *Three Christological factors (1-3)*. Christ endured all these and was “**perfect in body**” and life [*ολοκληρος*]. So the attitude of joy is paramount and the quality of patience is absolute and the enthusiastic commitment is as fresh daily as a sailor's unhesitating craving to go to sea again – despite the unforeseen. Such is James' will to face trial with good courage, avowed love for the Lord and joyful service of man.

CHRISTLIKENESS DESCRIBED BY JAMES 4-11

(1) **Nothing lacking** [*μηδενι λειπομενοι*] Christ's life was characterised by joy – by the ability to sustain enthusiasm and by **wisdom**. That is found through prayer. Solomon's wisdom can be sourced to his prayer in 1 Kings 3.9. James urges that we simply believe and don't dither or waiver like a rolling wave so that all initiative breaks up in useless foam. The believer must act on God's promise – it is simply given without throwing reproach in your teeth or “blame for past foolishness” [*ονειδιζοντος*] One can see immediately where James is coming from – that

resurrection interview with his Lord like that of Peter cast no damper on his witness but spurred him to new endeavour. Wisdom is the **prescription for life** and its trials given whenever one is alongside God – drawing nigh and practicing the presence of the Lord [*παρα του κυριου*]. Jacobus just prayed and prayed and prayed – he earned the trusty title “Camel-knees! He walked with God. *Christological truth (4) – like Christ lives alongside the Father from day to day!*

(2) **Humility** Christ was “submissive” [*ταπεινος* “carpet like humility”]

Down from His glory, ever-living story,
My God and Saviour came, and Jesus was His name;
Born in a manger, to His own a stranger,
A man of sorrows, tears and agony!

Let ours too be a willingness to walk as He walked as depicted by the prophet Micah (6.8). Christ’s humiliation resulted in His exaltation (Ephesians 4.8) so like James we should be equally inspired by the confidence that goes with His “ascension” and our standing in Him. So Christian meekness is humility spiced with confidence. The reverse characteristic is presented in the rich who like the flower of the field [*ως ανθος*] were fast fading in the growing climate of austerity and trial in the middle first century (cf. *Acts 11*). The Lord’s humility was both a model and a verdict of judgment as “the humility of the very rich” [*πλουσιος*] set in relief against the callous pride of the rich of the era. James upholds Christ’s noble example – for even the despoiling of “the dignity of the face” of the loveliest man under the figure of the falling flower in face of the noonday sun – a figure of persecution – Christ endured and revived (v11-12). This is an enduring lesson and admonition to the rich of this world. The rich man will fade away even during his business trips – and never return – but the Christ in His great act of dying for us “rose again” *Humility and Assurance both Christological(5)*

(3) **Happy** is the man or **leader** (cf. *Psalm 1*) who endures seduction or trial. Here in v12 is an express promise of Jesus that such shall have the crown of **everlasting spring like life** [*στεφανος ζωης*] nowhere else noted in the NT till Rev2.10. This teaching may have come from the Lord’s teaching over 40 days or simply from *James’ Peniel interview (with the Risen Christ)*. It is axiomatic that as in the case of Peter the Lord also called James to leadership at that time. *Happiness is Christological (6)*

No-one **who puts himself in the way of temptation** *πειραζομενος* can blame God (v.14). Here again is a Christological sentence “God (in Christ) is not subject to seduction – this harks back to the *Christological truth (7)* with which Jesus confronted the devil in Matthew 4.17.

THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION 14-15

Each is seduced by his own desire and carried captive – hooked by the artifice of bait (*fishing metaphor*). Desire (1) Conceive (2) Gestates or develops sin and (3) Births death (*a metaphor adopted from gynaecology*)

UNION WITH CHRIST (2) 19

I invite you to go back to v12 to better understand James’ expression “**BELOVED BROTHERS**”. Such are those who seek the crown of life and love the Lord with *αγαπη* love. Leaders or Christians are encouraged not to be seduced so as to digress from truth with the result that they get lost in life’s labyrinth and become “wandering stars” (*Jude 13*).

Now every **good legacy** *δοσις αγαθη* of the cross and every **sacrificial gift** *τελειον δωρημα* we bring to God in his honour are Gods alone. Everything comes from the Father of lights or “messengers who speak for Him” [*φωτων*]. The term applies to angels and stars also.

God does not make a difference between the brave and good? With God there is no **turning sour** or change of mood as from summer smiles to winter frostiness *τροπη*. Again we have a reflective *Christological statement (8)* out of James’ experience of the Lord. God does not go in opposite directions – He is **righteous παραλαγη** He does not change as **the shadow on a**

sundial αποσκιασμα – He does not go round in circles. So God in Christ is absolutely sure and we must be steadfast too *Christological truth* (9)

The Lord's one desire has been to bring us to birth by the **engrafted εμφυτον** word of truth so that we should be the first fruits of a great colony or re-settlement of the earth in righteousness **κτισμάτων**

UNION WITH CHRIST (3) 19

Brave ones –to whom the crown is promised – as if to say live above seduction.

Let each be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to wrath. Mans wrath does not accomplish the righteousness of God. This is further in character *Christological truth* (10)

Put away all sordidness – in terms both of subtle and prodigious evil and meekly receive the word engrafted – which can save the soul. Become doers or memorizers of the word – like poets committing it to mind.

A man who does not memorise and meditate (cf. Psalm 1 v.2 with v.23) and so be **inspired** by the word **to do it ποιητης** as was Christ (*There lurks within this statement a Christological concept*(12) *or reference back to how Jesus lived out the Father's will daily and from birth*) is like a man who considers his face **at the start of a day or every day in life from birth**

γενεσεως and goes on forgetting is as one who sees himself and yet does not know his old nature or indeed his new. But a man who stoops sideways and keeps looking into the perfect law of liberty, the scriptures – and that by the help of God's Spirit internalises, commits it to memory and lives out the *Christological truth*(13).

If any thinks he is religious and does not control his tongue [*Christological truth* (14) *referencing back to James' experience of Jesus*] but deceives his own heart his religion is empty. Pure religion is to visit the orphan and widow and be unblemished from the world – i.e. not ruin the estate of either but care about them. This references back to Christ's word "Mother, behold thy son" yielding Mary to cousin John's tender care at the cross. That act deeply impacted James as showing the Lord's omniscience and appreciation of the long future of Mary, of John and affording awareness of the briefer span of James' own life. [*Christological truth*(15)]

James continues in this context to rate **Religious service θρεσκεια** or care of orphan and widow as demanding an unworldly and godly life which after the resurrection of his Lord deeply characterised James.

As you will by now have gathered Jacobus has written out of his experience and gives us a letter absolutely **brimming over with examples of the mind and lifestyle of Jesus Christ**.

How ever could *Luther*, the father of the reformation, dismiss it as *a right strawy epistle*? My counter-claim to the remark of Luther is that the principles of Jesus' uniquely beautiful lifestyle are presented most felicitously and constitute one of the Church's most practical models of how to live like Christ.

CHAPTER 2

HOW TO KEEP THE FAITH 1-4 (Note Galatians 2.10)

UNION WITH CHRIST (4)

"BROTHERS, do not keep the faith with *face-prejudice*". James speaks of his faith and ours as being **the faith of the Lord of Glory**. Because of the perception of Martin Luther we need to take considerable care about teaching on "faith" – especially in this part of the letter.

James is saying Christ is our Lord. He is saying Jesus is Lord of the heavenly "Shekinah" who came in great humility so that we must strenuously eschew pre-judgement and prejudice. The view that the man wearing a gold ring and splendid clothes "deserves merits" and a good seat while the very poor with red earth on his clothing is made to stand or shunted to a footstool must not go unchallenged. The Lord **looks on the heart** and desires to see true worship, humility, wisdom and faith in the heart. James asks, "Are you not combatants, split into parties?" "Have you become critics of evil reasonings?"

James teaching is definitively *Christological*(16) as reference to Matthew 16.8, Mark 2.8 and 8.17 with Luke 5.22 and 24.15 will establish. James asserts that "dialogue" in the sense of cynical debate and rejection of righteous principles shows a terrible lack of faith that puts love

to work (*cf. Matthew 16.8*). James further asserts that the Lord is faithful to the beggarly poor and to all sorts and conditions of men – He has even a special place for the very little child – the men of Mark 2.8 were chided for their **hard hearts** and so it ever is with the Lord of Glory. Let me lend this greater emphasis by quoting vintage *Matthew Henry* – “All the compassions of all the tender fathers in the world compared with the tender mercies of our God would be a candle to the sun”.

QUESTIONS CHRISTIAN MUST ANSWER 5-13

UNION WITH CHRIST (5)

QUESTION (1) 5

Has not God, **MY BELOVED BROTHERS**, chosen the abysmally poor of this world, **incredibly rich in faith** and promised those who love Him an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven? This seems to be an authoritative reading of Matthew 5.3 “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven” – but the poor do not attain it by poverty rather by faith. James’ full concept of “faith riches” as expressed here is better understood by referring to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 8.10 and also Luke 7.9 and we are to recognize that James is aware that at the same time as upholding the rights of the poor the Saviour called for faith”!

QUESTION (2) 6

Do not the rich exploit you (*perhaps Sadducees*) and **drag you ελκυσιν** into court. This may be seen in the context of persecution – taken with Paul’s **bringing bound δεδεμενος αλαλη** of Acts 9.2 to courts where rabbinic law was the criterion. The *people of the way* had not absolutely separated from the synagogues in this period. The date of writing looks like the period of Saul’s persecution! The earliest suggested date is 48AD – but why not 38 or even 37AD as this *probable* reference to Saul’s ruthless opposition would suggest?

QUESTION (3) 7-13

Do they not blaspheme the beautiful name by which you are called (*a further Christ centric reference (17)*)? The first “popular” naming of Christians as *Ἰῆ Βρούε* calls it was at Antioch – where the Agabus the prophet escaping Judean turmoil joined in fellowship prior to his prophecy of the famine of *Claudian* times (AD 41-54) [Acts 11.28]. Agabus move north also supports the proposition of an early date for the writing of the letter.

James continues in keeping with his *Christ centric style (18)* by further highlighting one of Jesus’ most famous dictums saying “If you fulfil the Royal law according to scripture (*Lev 19.18*) “Love your neighbour as yourself” you do beautifully – but if you pay respect to face and rank you enact a sin and are brought to the light of law as transgressors. Whoever guards all the law but stumbles on one part is guilty of all and remains so (*the perfect tense as Lenski remarks shows the guilt remains*). James applies the stiff continuous term **murderer** to anyone who might say “I have never committed adultery” but has blood on his hands. Pauline misconduct cannot be eliminated from this statement. Paul did recognise himself as “chief of sinners” and doubtless James’ word reflects the view of Christians prior to Paul’s conversion. So speak and so act (*these are inferential or apodosis statements*) – offering the only hope – “as ready to be judged by the law of liberty **for the judgment or last crisis judgment** will be without mercy to those who have not acted mercifully, and mercy triumphs over crisis judgment.”

THE FAITH WORKS ADVANCE

UNION WITH CHRIST (6) 14

- 1 **BROTHERS** “What value is it if one should say “I have faith – but he has no actions to? Prove it?”
- 2 Surely the faith involved is not able absolutely or once-for-all to save him?
- 3 But if a brother or sister **have only one under tunic γυμνος** and lack daily food and any from you should say “you must keep warm and eat well” but not supply them bodily necessities what is the advance – so also this faith if it has no practical expression is dead on its own evidence

But a certain person will say “You have faith and I have practical evidence – demonstrate your faith without your practical evidence and I will demonstrate mine from my actions”.

QUESTION 1

“Do you believe that **God is one**? You do – it is lovely (*theory?*) The devils also believe in this way and tremble. If you can only believe with a terrible fear and foreboding such faith is inconsequential *and a non-sequitor of love*.

QUESTION 2

“Are you willing to accept the **deeper wisdom** *γνωσις* O empty man, that faith without energised act is a corpse?” James is alluding to the “**Spirit of faith**” – the Spirit of God given to believers

QUESTION 3

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac on the altar – faith is called **obedience** in Genesis 22 – “the obedience of faith”? Abraham withheld nothing from God – his was a full commitment and consecration. That is yet another aspect of genuine faith.

QUESTION 4

“Do you see that faith was energising his deeds and from those actions the faith was completed? The implication is that when Abraham saw the ram the last piece of the jigsaw in God’s original command “Go offer him (*a masculine*) offering at a place I will show you” was in place. Abraham’s discussion with Isaac maintained there would be a divine provision and he believed God had something special to show him – he even believed, Paul says, to receive Isaac from the dead. In the end Mount Moriah truly spoke of **future substitution** typified by a ram. This is faith’s high joy – it is completed by believing and acting in total obedience and assurance given to Abraham and to us by the Holy Spirit and it directs Abraham and all ever afterward to that holy commitment of the sanctified Son who died on Calvary. Genesis 15.6 speaks of “The reckoning” and James is well aware of such reckoning under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 5

“Do **YOU now** (*a little ironically*) through looking for provisions **see** it is not faith by itself but **seeking what God provides** by effective acts of obedience *enabled by the Holy Spirit* that justifies?

QUESTION 6

“Likewise was not Rahab the harlot justified – having once received the messengers of “substitution” who dealt with her according to the substitutionary principle “our lives for yours” – when she sent them off in a different way? She was changed – she may have had information with fear before but now she was wholly trusting in God with faith and anticipation. As the body without the spirit is dead – so faith without energising works inspired by the Spirit is dead. James has brought us into his own ancient line quietly showing the love that develops alongside faith which promotes great works or exploits of faith – in the case of Abraham – and in the case of Rahab where her faith resulted in marriage to Salmon and inclusion in the camp of the people of God and the blood line of the Redeemer.

VITAL AND CHRIST-CENTRED

The statement in Galatians 5.6 “Faith works by love” is essentially the teaching of James-Paul went on to teach that the Spirit develops that love in its quality and variety of expression – Christ likeness.

CHAPTER 3

UNION WITH CHRIST (7) 1-2

“**MY BROTHERS** – not many of you should become teachers knowing that we will receive greater judgment”. James acknowledges that we stumble often. He states a hypothetical – “If

anyone does not stumble he is a perfect man and able to control the whole body i.e. the church". Christ was ever capable of faultlessly guidance. *[There is further (19)Christological background in the concept of the "perfect man".]*

THREE ILLUSTRATIONS 3-5

1. "Look – we put bits in the mouths of horses to gain obedience or persuade them and direct their body".
2. "Look at the ships – they are very great and are blown by fierce winds yet turned around by small rudders where the pulse of the helmsman decides.
3. "Look, a little fire kindles a tall tree & the tongue is a fire – a *cosmos* of iniquity. So the tongue is "self-appointed tyrant"; it sets aflame the circular wheel of *genesis*. (*Possible literal understanding of the Greek is meant – indicating that "original sin" began from the word of Satanic temptation*) suggesting the continuous circle of sin in history. Its terrible rubbish is the self-igniting stuff of hell."

THE UNTAMED TONGUE 6-9

Calvin said that "other vices give way with age – those of the tongue spread". James emphasises the problem of bringing the tongue under control – it cannot be tamed like a beast, bird, reptile or insect or readily brought within human confines. **Fallible man** *ανθρωπινη* [*the reference sits well with the concept of original sin just alluded to*] has gained dominion over these but the tongue resists our control.

1. Nobody can dominate it once for all.
2. It is a restless evil (*Phillips*) or semi-wild member.
3. It is a carrier full of deadly poison – the idea is a serpent.
4. In the tongue's sphere we bless God the Father and curse man who is **complete in the likeness of God** *γεγονοτας* – This is beautifully *Christological*(20)
5. From the same source blessing and cursing come

UNION WITH CHRIST (8) 10

BROTHERS, it is not fitting or right or destiny that it should be so. You never find the same open water source **gush** with fresh and bitter water. James emphasises the continuous problem that he finds – it is overwhelming – voluminous – sin abounds! It is not a trickle of difficulty but a kind of Jericho spring – a serious volume issue.

UNION WITH CHRIST (9) 12

It is impossible, **BROTHERS**, for a fig tree to produce olives or for a vine to produce figs So James shows sin has no mirror image in divinely designed workings of the earth. Good trees produce good fruit. Everything replicates itself but sin corrupts the very genetics of creation. It is not in the constitution of things – it is a surd linked with the fall – the "**genesis** sin circle"

CREEPING EVIL AND CONVERSION 13

"**Who** is wise and skilled **like a sailor dancer thinker** [*επιστεμων*] – let him demonstrate or point out from a beautiful conversion his works in meekness or discipline of wisdom" Here we have two things (a) the acknowledgment of the need for conversion to begin that big change in discipline and (b) the ethic of Christ – *Christological reference* . Meekness is the sign of conversion. The opposite is "bitter zeal and strife" in the heart. So it is pointless to boast and lie against truth – this wisdom is not (a) **heaven-sent**, rather (b) it creeps along **the earth** like a serpent – it is fleshly – under the spell of a **demon** *δαιμονιωδης*
Where there is zeal and strife there is lack of control and every paltry or good-for- nothing act or work. The word **meekness** [*πραυοτης*] describes that which develops in a gracious world of true conversion.

Heavenly wisdom is (1) pure (2) peaceable (3) easily persuaded [*"conciliatory" – Moffatt*] (4) merciful and (5) fruitful. (6) It is not partial or (7) wavering or (8) continually critical or superficial and playacting. (9) But it is quite different – **fruit of righteousness sown in the**

circle of peace (*always harvesting!*) by those who make peace-evangelists... Paul in his “beautiful” conversion kicked off in immediate evangelism.

James contrasts the circle of meek wisdom and peace with the circle of nature. The contrast of the one with the other can be seen in v6 contrasting with vv14 and 18. The difference has to be “conversion” that accompanies **works energised from a beautiful life change** or turning about that eschews zeal. Of late *Robert Eisenmann* has associated James with the sicarii and the zealot party but in this vital context so obviously critical of their earthiness he distinctly distances himself from them. His thesis is all but dead-in-the-water at this point.

The conclusion one is drawn to is that Paul had been till of late acting as reported in Acts 9.1 as a rabid persecutor and his wonderful recent conversion which would be widely known is broadly referenced whilst his anonymity is preserved as a lucid demonstration of what wisdom from heaven alone can do – i.e. Christ the wisdom of God. Should this time-frame fit the early date proposed on other evidence for the writing of the letter would be further enhanced

“If you would keep your lips from sin three things observe with care
To whom you speak, of whom you speak and how and why and where.”

Bunyan sensed the vanity of talk. His well-drawn character, Mr Talkative of Prating Row “had a home as empty of religion as the white of an egg of savour. As soon as heart work is mentioned he is off”

“I lost a little word the other day
My little brother picked it up
And now he says it too”

In Psalm 51 David begins to rise above the guilt and depression necessarily parcelled together with his heinous sin over Bathsheba and praise once more wells up in his spirit. He writes “Open Thou my lips and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.” Amid brokenness he sings the song of the truly penitent heart. His song fits well alongside the conversion of Saul of Tarsus as a line drawn under the past and evidence of a renewed walk with the Lord.

CHAPTER 4

Against dogmatism and for the “ten principles”

A MILITARY FIGURE

The Lord Jesus in Matthew 15.19 depicts a series of sins as Roman legions setting out on the march not in this instance from Rome but from the capitol of the heart to do battle – the figure is picked up here by James – “from whence lust?” Answer – “Comes it not from the heart?” Paul calls for the individual as a soldier to lay down his arms and surrender his lusts in obedience to Christ see Romans 6.13 & 7.23. James is speaking of a “**long war**” *πολεμος* and of “**constant battles**” *μαχη*. He talks of praying for prosperity to stoke up hedony and of men and women indulging in adulterous life-styles. He stresses this invalidates prayer as the doer falls on the side of “personal animosity” not personal devotion” to God. To wish friendship with the world constitutes being an enemy of God.

HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE LETTER

There is an acute New Testament **divergence** between **Paul the Roman citizen**, endangered by the **sicarii** – Paul who speaks positively about Felix and Agrippa and Nero, Paul who is permitted to preach conversion to the zealot Jews at the temple wall itself and **James the holiest man in Jerusalem** by common consent. James opposed the old-style priests and apparently entered the holy place to pray and he had such popular support that ultimately the **sicarii** avenged his death. Nevertheless James’ teaching (a) on the Holy Spirit “settling down in us” and (b) God’s grace to the humble and (c) the “burning jealousy” of God against Pride is identical with Paul’s. *Josephus* writes about Jerusalem at the time and contrasts the Roman soldier and Agrippa 2 who both peer over the temple wall. The Soldier lifts his skirt and

“farts” while the King enjoyed a feast as a spectacle. Meantime Poppea the Jewess that married Nero was pregnant through **adultery**. True godliness was lost to king and commoner alike.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES ARTICULATE DIVINE RESISTANCE 6-10

The mention of “divine jealousy”(v.5 and Exodus 20.5) and the connection with a “curse on the house of the wicked and blessing on the just, mocking of the proud and grace for the humble”(v.6 and Proverbs 3 33-5) puts God in the “line up against” the conspicuous arrogant one who seem conspicuous, magnificent and noble in the world’s eyes.

PRAYER AND HUMILITY

Against the prevailing climate of following **lust and pride** (v4-6) James calls on believing men and women to line up and humbly line up in submissive allegiance to God (v.6). Clearly James sees the situation as polarised between the “humble and proud”. His call is inextricably linked with personal and corporate prayer. He analyses their ineffectual prayer: “You ask and receive not because you ask amiss”. He calls them to “Draw nigh to God” in a new spirit of humility – because God is the enemy of the proud.

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR NATIONAL REPENTANCE AND GODLY LIVING 7-9

These tests of faith may be used much like temperature, blood pressure, weight & stamina checks – why not use them regularly?

- 1 Submit **υποταγετη** to God (cf. Baptism of Jesus)
- 2 Oppose **ανθιστημαι** the devil – not the king or the Romans – know your enemy and he will flee (cf. temptation of Jesus)
- 3 Draw near **εγγισατε** to God [in discipleship and prayer like James] – this is a condition of intimacy
- 4 Wash **καθαριζω** your hands from sin. This involves catharsis or freedom from guilt. It is James’ shorthand for “Have part in the atonement”.
- 5 Purify **αग्νιζω** your hearts, you who are in two minds.
- 6 Endure hardship **ταλαιπωρησατε** and suffering for Christ.
- 7 Go into mourning **πενθασατε** and concern for the spiritually dead.
- 8 Weep aloud **κλαυσσατε** in pain (cf. Christ weeping over the city).
- 9 Change **μεταστρεφω** your occasion of laughter to mourning – your joy to being “mute”.
- 10 Humble yourselves **ταπεινω** in the very inner presence of God and he will exalt you. This was the way of Jesus – who was the lamb of heaven. Heaven is our hope and his Kingdom! James uses two OT references, one from Proverbs 3.35 “The wise inherit glory – fools are promoted to shame” and one from Isaiah 1.16 “Wash you **now**”

Draw near – *Herodotus* uses **εγγυς** in a fathers granting his daughter’s hand – “I draw near to you my Son”

The range of references in verses 8 and 10 show that James attached his praying to the divine promises which he held dear and obviously used as he spoke with the Lord.

“Turn to me and I will turn to you – says the Almighty” Zechariah 1.3 “Why return?” Malachi 3.7 – “To be made like the Lord, so that He may come back!” “For outpoured blessing” “for the end of punishing plague” “For precious sonship” For “healing” “for national renewal” Job 5.11 “God answers prayer-sends rain-promotes one-brings down another”

UNION WITH CHRIST (10) 11-12

BROTHERS – do not speak glibly against one another. James alludes to Solomon’s doctrine “He that meddles with strife belonging not to him is like one taking a dog by the ears or a madman casting firebrands around him” (Proverbs 26.17). One who continues to slander and judge slanders and judges the law. This makes you not a “doer” but a “judge” of the law. There is one who laid the law as a foundation and who is able to save and destroy. Who are you who judges another **quite different** person from yourself? James is speaking about “prejudice”. The law demands truth and allows differences. It is not a basis for “talking down” or

“dogmatising”. James may well be alluding to Jewish criticism of Gentiles. As the reader will observe he speaks almost in riddles and is nowhere harsh or vindictive.

FORWARD PLANNING 13-17

“Go now”. “Today or tomorrow maybe – we set off for the city and stay a year – trade and make a tidy profit”. That is business – but it is not wisdom. Do not “Hallel or praise your own bright future – transferring praise from God to yourself”. Praise the Lord. Remember you life is as *JB Phillips* put it “A puff of smoke” – as temporary morning mist on this earth.

GOD WILLING

So in place of boasting **build on Gods will** – say “God willing we will Live and do this or that. Similar advice is found in Acts 18.21, Romans 1.10, 1Cor4.19 and 16 6-7.

This attitude which consciously sets one’s life under God contrasts with empty bragging. To know to do well and not do it is sin. So the simple rule may be summarised “Let your going about be beautiful and governed by God’s will”. (*This clearly is a Christological reference* (23)

It is easy to be a **vagabond** *αλαζων* or travelling quack with no healing to offer and no glorious purpose except self-interest. Christ went about “doing good”. The world is largely going about self-aggrandising.

There is no essential wrong in industry and fair “**profit**” *κερδος* but when the Christian life and even the Christian’s business is not keyed to the Lord’s purpose there is sin or a missing of the mark – God’s will ceases to be a factor and “going about” for its own sake is out of kilter with God and out of harmony with his will.

CHAPTER 5

“GO NOW” – A PRESCRIPTION 1-2

James has another priority for the “very rich”. He first advises “weeping” and “**crying aloud** to God” [*κλαιω*] the painful part must come first. Repentance and willingness to change are of the essence... **Calling on God** [*ολολυζω*] is another emphasis – it is used frequently of women who besought God in distressful birthing pain – it is keenly expressive of acute pain – which give way to joy (*the prevalent Homeric use is “thankfulness*). So “great exertions” of businesses are compared to those of childbirth. **Severe pain** [*ταλαιπωρια*] is here linked with the following pangs: –

1 Riches turn “rotten” – maybe fruit (*the word translates into the English term” septic”*)

2 Beautiful garments for sale are moth-eaten

3 Gold and silver are tarnished

4 **Rust** or arrow or poison is your witness – for [*ιος*] can be any one of these. As rust weakens so sin ruins.

BUILDING UP TREASURE 3b

“In the circle of the **last days** treasure is unavailing

In Chapter 3 James gave us three examples introduced by the Greek term that is used to gain attention and state **that which delightfully surprises** *ιδου* ; he now gives us four more.

1. Look (*under the great vineyard owner cf. v6*) land-owners; those who mow your fields as contract labourers cry out for their wages which you are withholding.

The howls of harvesters have come to the ears of the Lord of hosts. You live extravagant or **sumptuous** *τραφαω* and as “spoilt children” with **jewellery** *σπαταλαω*. You made your hearts thick or “curdled” as on eve of preparation of Passover when blood shows the finality of death. You condemned – you killed the just one. He does not go to war with you or **demand vineyard** rent. **James points out there is grace** and time to learn to be “thankful” after these pains.

UNION WITH CHRIST (11) 7-9

The Lord’s return promotes quality living

“Be patient until the parousia of the Lord, **MY BROTHERS**”. In 1722 *Jonathan Edwards* said “I am resolved to do nothing I would be afraid to do if Christ came in the hour”

2. Look, **the gardener** awaits with expectation the precious fruits of the earth, patient over it till it receives the former & latter rains. [*Hebrew YOREH & MALAQUSH – the seeding and fruiting rains.*] Be patient – establish your hearts. Keep the carriage ready till the horses come to pull it. Hold on to the rainbow promises. **Settle your hearts in calm readiness** [*στέριζω*] for the **Parousia** is promised – like a pledge of engagement.

UNION WITH CHRIST (12) 9-11

Do not **sigh** *στεναζω* (*as over destiny*) like others so that you will not be judged.

3. Behold **the judge has** been standing before the doors. Take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord as a sign or example of suffering need and great patience.
4. Behold we think those happy who stay true under distress. You have heard of the **patience of Job**, you saw or **experienced** *ειδετε* the end of the Lord – for the Lord is massive in compassion and of tender mercy *This is a very distinct reference to Christ's death which James himself appears to have witnessed – a further Christological(24) notice of authenticity.*

UNION WITH CHRIST (13) 12-18

“But above all, **BROTHERS**, do not swear – either by heaven or earth or any other oath. Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no’ so that you do not fall under judgment.

(1) Who is suffering illness among you? Let him pray with a vow

(2) Who is having it straightforward? Let him sing.

(3) Who is weak in body among you? Let him call the elders of the church and they will pray with vows over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord and the vow of faith will save the sick or work-weary or battle-scarred. The Lord will raise him up – and his sin which he has done will be forgiven. Confess your transgressions one to another and **make vows on behalf of one another** so that you may be healed. James associated healing with Prayer and with relationships which are costly and caring. This sort of prayer is a commitment – a willingness to bear the load of another soldier – whose problem was that he had not support or he carried too great a load. *Care for brothers & sisters is commended.*

PRAYER

The **energised prayer** of a righteous man has great power. Elijah was a man of like suffering to ourselves and **he made a vow in prayer** that it might not rain. It did not rain on the land for three and a half years. And again **he prayed by way of vow** and the heaven gave rain and the earth produced her fruit abundantly. Now Elijah was wholly given to the turning back of the nation and even the conversion of the wicked King Ahab. He had a big vision and he backed it with his whole heart – working with king, people and prophets and anchoring it to prayer commitment. *Prayer for the nation is commended*

UNION WITH CHRIST (14)

“**BROTHERS** – if any err from the way of truth and openness and anyone turn him back in repentance, let him know that the man who turns a sinner from wandering out of the way will save a soul from death and bury a multitude of sins. *Personal evangelism is commended and personal counselling*

FINIS

Bob Coffey

L'shuvkha Marya

(To the glory of the Lord)

Aramaic & Greek Bible Companion