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PREFACE

Although the book of James has had as few commentaries as perhaps any book within the New Testament, the writer freely admits the factual information contained in this volume has been gleaned from numerous other writings and commentaries on the book (See Bibliography). The purpose of this book, however, is not to simply add to the list of commentaries already written on James, though they be relatively few. This work is not, and was not intended to be, a highly critical, technical and linguistical contribution. Rather, this book (it is hoped), in following the original format of the *Bible Study Series*, will form a useful contribution to the fresh approach of these Bible studies.

The author has endeavored to be fair in presenting various views of controversial interpretations. He requests the reader, however, to expect that the author's preferences will be made clear. In the various paraphrases used, more than one view is sometimes expressed. That view preferred by the author will always be listed first. In the *Comment* sections, the author attempts to clearly set forth his reasons for his preferred views.

It is expected that this volume will serve as a study text to enable Bible students, whether teacher, preacher, or pupil, to better make his own study of the book of James. The format is in keeping with this intended purpose. Questions regarding the text are offered in each section *before* the comments, and the paraphrases. The purpose in this is that the reader will attempt to answer the questions regarding the text from the text itself, using no commentary other than the Bible. The author admits his conviction that the Bible is its own best commentary; the questions are given with this thought in mind. It is often suggested other scripture texts that may be used in conjunction with the question at hand.

Since the epistle has within the text its own introduction, introductory material concerning the writer, date, etc. will be included at the appropriate point in the text. Every effort has been made to keep this work a Bible study, rather than a study about the Bible.

MEMORY

The writer would like to encourage the serious student to make an honest effort to memorize the entire text of the book of James.

At first suggestion, this might seem like a task of such a proportion as to be entirely impossible. The average reader, however, will be able to memorize the text with ease if he will follow the suggestions made.

It is not suggested that the reader be able to memorize the entire epistle at one effort. Although some who have developed a keen memory will find this the easiest way, the majority will find this mass approach discouraging and all but impossible. The study is divided into sections of the text; and most of these sections are short in length, being between one and four verses each in most cases. If the reader will be steadfast in memorizing each section before going on to the next section, there will be no formidable memory task. As he memorizes each section, he should *be sure* to repeat by memory the former sections already learned. This review is fully as important as the original memorizing if the student wishes to retain what he has learned. Do not be content to repeat the memorized material only once. Repeat it often, *especially after first committing to memory*. It is not difficult to repeat that which is already committed to memory, but it is easily forgotten if it is not repeated.

One housewife in Arkansas clipped the first verse of the epistle to the window of her kitchen sink. She determined to learn that verse in one day. To her amazement she found that by the time she had finished the breakfast dishes, she knew the first verse perfectly. As she went about her household affairs that morning, she repeated the verse every time the thought came to her mind. At noon, she decided to put the second verse of the epistle over the kitchen sink under the first. It came as easily as the first: while she was doing the dishes. On that first day, she memorized the first three verses. At this rate, she committed the entire epistle to memory in *five weeks*. So thrilled was she with this accomplishment she told her friends at Bible School. They, too, at first thought it was an impossible task. Those who tried, however, memorized the book as well. *You can too. Will you try? Make an honest effort.*

FORMAT

Text: The American Standard Version is used throughout. Since this text is admitted by most scholars to be the best translation available, we make no apology for its use here. However, we do

think the student would profit by having other translations available for his study. It is suggested that the student choose a translation he prefers for his memory work, and use that one translation in his memorizing of the text. Comparing all available versions will often clarify the meaning, so several should be used.

Queries: These questions immediately follow the text, and are designed to excite the interest and understanding of the student. This interest and comprehension will give the student initial motivation, and there is no real learning without both this comprehension and motivation. It is expected that the student will endeavor to answer the queries *before* reading the paraphrases and the comments to follow. He may wish to adjust some of his thinking after reading further, but first he has done some *original thinking* on the text.

Paraphrases: This is an endeavor to render the sense of the text in the framework of the author's intended meaning. Even though many may disagree as to the original author's intended concepts, we insist that this intended meaning is the only way to correctly read the text. At least two paraphrases are given for each text. The first being that of the author; and the last, marked with an *, being from the "*Living Letters. . . The Paraphrased Epistles,*" edited by Ken Taylor and used by permission of the Tyndale House Publishers. Often there will be another paraphrase given between the first and the last. This middle paraphrase will indicate a second possible concept intended by James. The first paraphrase given will be that preferred by the author of this book.

Summary: The heart of the text is here intended. This is the main thought in summary form, minus the descriptions, adjectives and illustrations. Thus several verses will be reduced to one or two sentences.

Comment: This is intended to help in understanding the text. Problems in comparing the correct meanings of the original text to the commonly accepted meaning of words used in the translation will be discussed. It is intended that these comments will more than clarify the text. We should like to apply the text and motivate the pupil to make personal adjustment to his own thinking and

living when necessary. We hope these comments will be stimulating, applicable, and even personal at times.

Additional Features: Several "special studies" are offered, where it is thought that additional material is especially useful or applicable at that point. In addition, sermons in outline form are given throughout the book at the end of each chapter. This is hoped to be an asset to teachers and preachers who intend to teach and preach from the book of James.

Acknowledgments and Gratitude: To my mother-in-law, Pansy Reed Click, who spent many hours correcting the rough draft, the author wishes to express sincere appreciation. Appreciation is also extended to the copyrighters of the *Living Letters, the Paraphrased Epistles* by Kenneth N. Taylor, who permitted the portion of that text used in this book.

It is with sober understanding of the responsibility assumed by anyone who teaches from the Word of God that this work is offered. With prayer and humility the author reads again James 3:1 ff. He is further humbled by a consideration of the dozen commentaries consulted in compiling this work. This is submitted with a prayerful hope that some will be stimulated to a more accurate study of God's Word.

Donald Fream
April, 1965