

PREACHING THROUGH HEBREWS AND JAMES

Written to Jewish Christians in the first century, these two books containing a total of eighteen chapters are addressed to two different problems, both of which have modern parallels and applications.

The book of Hebrews is addressed to those who were tempted to let their Christian faith and commitment slip away in favor of the more convenient forms of their traditional Judaism. They are told that such a course would be spiritual suicide. The message of Hebrews is needed by every Christian today as he is faced with the overwhelming busy-ness of the present world which tempts him to "get out of the habit" of the practices of Christian faith.

The book of James is a brief and practical preachment addressed to the problems of a living faith — temptation, lust and sin; patience, wisdom and prayer; poverty, riches and respect of persons; faith and good works; sins of the tongue, quarrelsomeness, worldly-mindedness, and self-sufficiency. These problems are modern as well as ancient. So is the Christian answer to them.

The writer of Hebrews is not named in the book. His thinking is like that of Paul; the fine literary polish of his writing is different from the informal character of Paul's other letters. The time of the writing is near the end of Paul's life. The theme of the book is "Christ, God's Perfect and Final Revelation."

Chapters 1-4	Christ Supreme
5—7:10	Christ the Universal High Priest
7:11—8:13	Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant
9-10	Christ the Perfect Sacrifice
11-13	The Achievements of Faith; the past inspiring the future.

The writer of James is not James the Apostle who was the brother of John, but rather "James the Just," the half brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55; Gal. 2:9) who became a believer after the resurrection of Christ (I Cor. 15:7) and achieved a place of influence in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15). He was known for his piety and wisdom, and although he was himself a strict observer of the Jewish Law, he insisted upon the freedom of Gentile Christians

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from the Law. His letter to the Christian Jews everywhere speaks of the daily temptations by which their faith will be tried, and advises them to meet the temptations with steadfast faith, prayer, and active good deeds.

Sermon Outlines Provided:

- “A Revealed Word” (Heb. 1:1-4)
- “The Starting Point” (Heb. 6:1-12)
- “The Old and the New” (Heb. 8)
- “Let Us . . .” (Heb. 10:19-25)
- “The Joy of Thy Lord” (Heb. 12:1-6)
- “Swift to Hear” (James 1:19-27)
- “Show Me Your Faith” (James 2:14-24)
- “Occupational Hazards in the Ministry” (James 3)

Other Sermon Topics Suggested:

- “If We Neglect” (Heb. 2:1-9)
- “Pilgrims” (Heb. 11:13-16)
- “Whence Come Wars?” (James 3:13—4:4, 10)
- “Add Patience” (James 5:7-11)

QUESTIONS OVER HEBREWS AND JAMES

1. God has spoken in the last days through whom? (Heb. 1:2)
2. Who is called apostle in Hebrews 3:1?
3. Jesus learned obedience in what way according to the Hebrew writer? (5:8)
4. When the priesthood is changed, what else necessarily changes? (7:12)
5. It is appointed unto men to do what? (9:27)
6. Hebrews 10:31 says what is a fearful or terrifying thing?
7. Moses chose to suffer ill-treatment with the people of God rather than to enjoy what? (11:25)
8. What is the descriptive title of Jesus used in the benediction to the Hebrew letter? (13:20)
9. How does James define pure religion? (James 1:27)
10. We should say what when we declare our plans? (4:15)
11. Who is given as an example for our prayer life? (5:17, 18)

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A REVEALED WORD

(Hebrews 1:1-4)

INTRODUCTION — From his ignorance and sin, man is rescued, as it were, by helicopter!

- A. Men do get themselves into predicaments where they can be reached only from above.
- B. The knowledge of God cannot be attained by seeking, striving, searching.
 - 1. Discovery is limited to knowing God's power and divinity (Rom. 1:19-20).
 - 2. For His nature, His will, and His purpose for men, we must depend on revelation.
- C. Genesis 1:1 and Hebrews 1:1 overleap all human discovery by declaring a revealed truth: God created, and God has spoken to His creatures.

I. GOD SPEAKS.

- A. The very name of God, found in the Old Testament, is revealed and revealing.
 - 1. God identified himself to Moses at the burning bush (Exod. 3:13-15).
 - 2. It speaks of one absolute; there can be no other god or gods.
 - 3. It speaks of one eternal, without beginning and without end, dwelling in an unchanging present tense: I AM.
 - 4. Most importantly, it speaks of one who makes himself known to His people.
- B. God is personal: He thinks, feels, wills, judges, and makes known His thoughts, feelings, and will.
- C. God is interested in His creation, and so communicates with it.

II. GOD SPOKE TO THE FATHERS THROUGH THE PROPHETS.

- A. In this sentence, as in the rest of Hebrews, the writer includes the whole sweep of sacred history.

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1. It is summed up in what God did, and what He said (Compare Acts 1:1, of Jesus).
 2. God did nothing more important than to speak.
 3. Revelation is thus a matter of history, rather than of philosophy.
 - a. Solomon used experience as a source and learned only that experience is vain (theme of Ecclesiastes). Experience teaches the limitations of experience.
 - b. Job spoke of man's search (mining) for wisdom, and concluded, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28).
 - c. The prophets, to whom and through whom God spoke, became witnesses to the fact of God's speaking (Heb. 3:5 declares this of Moses).
- B. God's word came to various prophets in various ways.
1. To Elijah the word of the Lord came at least once in the still small voice.
 2. Isaiah could testify to an introduction, "I saw the Lord" (6:1).
 3. Amos was taken from following the sheep (7:15).
 4. Joseph and Daniel recounted dreams and interpretations.
- C. For all the prophets Peter summarized, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1:19-21).

III. GOD HAS SPOKEN TO US THROUGH HIS SON.

This is the central declaration and emphasis in the book of Hebrews.

- A. It is the same God speaking in various times and manners.
1. Jesus identified with the prophets, quoting, "It is written."
 2. The Gospel writers (Matthew especially) declared Jesus' fulfillment of prophecy.

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- B. God gave many assurances that He did indeed speak and act through Jesus as His Son.
1. The assurance was verbal at Jesus' baptism and His transfiguration (Matt. 3:17; 17:5).
 2. The assurance reached its climax in God's raising Jesus from the dead (Acts 17:31).
- C. God-given glories became the basis of Jesus' miracles.
1. As "heir of all things," He became host in feeding the multitudes (Matt. 14:19).
 2. As Maker of the worlds, He controlled the storms on Galilee (Matt. 8:23-27).
 3. The "brightness of [God's] glory" was seen in the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8).
 4. The "image of His person" was declared: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).
 5. The "word of His power" is also declared: "As the Father hath life in himself; so he hath given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26).
 6. Of Him who "purged our sins" it is declared, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (II Cor. 5:19).
- D. Eyewitnesses testified to the acts and the words by which God spoke through Christ.
- Their testimony is in the Gospels (Luke 1:1-4).

CONCLUSION — One declaration is not yet supported by eye-witnesses. "He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high." Your own coming experience will establish that!

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THE STARTING POINT

(Hebrews 6:1-12)

INTRODUCTION — The point where preachers become impatient with their people.

The point where they discover that they can't deal with them as men and spiritual equals, but must deal with them as babes.

W. E. Sweeney says a preacher gets tired of pushing 25-year old Christians in baby carriages.

The writer of the Hebrew letter (5:11) knows he is talking over their heads and bemoans the fact.

“By reason of time ye ought to be

teachers, ye have need to be taught . . .”

Ministers, ye have need to be ministered to.

Visitors and inviters, ye have need to be visited and invited.

Evangelists, ye have need to be evangelized.

Helpers of others, ye have need to be helped yourself.

I. FIRST PRINCIPLES.

“Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God” (5:12).

A. The first principles must first be established—Supposed already to be.

1. Building cannot be built until foundation is laid.

2. American haste is impatient with foundations, builds tall on little, spiritually and educationally. (High school students know neither spelling nor grammar — so spiritually also.)

3. C. C. Morrison says if he were a pastor again he would preach doctrine.

B. There is often need of laying again the foundation of first principles.

1. “Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is in you” (II Pet. 1:12, ASV).

“To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe” (Phil. 3:3, ASV).

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2. Perhaps the foundation was not well laid.
(The workman jacks up the house and bolsters the floors.)
 3. There come storms and stresses which shake the foundation of faith.
— Flood damages a building, weakens it, and rebuilding is necessary.
 4. The natural ravages of time and forgetfulness.
— The brick needs pointing up occasionally.
- C. What are the first principles?
1. Repentance from “dead works” (self trust) or “works of death.”
— There are still some in the church who think that the form suffices.
 2. Faith toward God.
— So we must sound again and again the clear notes of the Gospel.
 3. Baptisms—to the believer, baptism into Christ.
(For them, Christian baptism compared with ceremonial washings.) Methodist preacher refused to preach on it: “Settled in our church.”
 4. Laying on of hands—teaching of apostolic authority.
Making of Christian workers.
 5. Resurrection—Christ’s and our own.
Christian life in the atmosphere of eternity.
 6. Judgment—“He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”
Rewards and punishments. . . . Many would seek eternity without it.

II. DEVELOPMENT.

Press on to perfection.

— We cannot, we must not stop at the starting point.

- A. “Go on or get off.”
- B. One comes to his preacher asking removal—is put to work instead.
- C. “For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only

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what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins" (II Pet. 1:9, ASV).

III. FATE OF THE UNDEVELOPED.

- A. Warning against the apostasy which comes with stagnation; this is not a pleasant prospect.
- B. Some try to dodge this picture by "once in grace always." — Describe the "tasters" as those who have not shared fully . . . but . . .
 - "He tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2:9).
 - "Ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (I Pet. 2:3).
- C. Note development of those who are described as being lost in backsliding.

IV. REASONS FOR HOPE.

"We are persuaded better things of you" (v. 9).

- A. There must be a reason for that persuasion. This writer is not like the fortune teller who prophesies only good.
 - Nor like the Jewish storekeeper, who says "I'll give a special price just because it is you."
- B. "For your work and love" — These are demonstrations.
 - "You have ministered to the saints."
- C. Most of those present are among those who bear marks of faithfulness. Hence conclusion.

CONCLUSION —

First accept Him according to the first principles.

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THE OLD AND THE NEW
(Hebrews 8)

INTRODUCTION — Remember Marcion, who very early insisted that Paul was the real authority in Christianity and that all Jewish influence was to be rejected.

Like the modern liberal, he went too far in making distinction between old and new.

- I. BOTH THE OLD AND THE NEW ARE REVELATIONS FROM GOD. (See Heb. 1:1.)
 - A. Each is given as it is ready to be received.
 - B. Same God—Characterized by love and justice. Judgment is found also in New Testament. Power and Fatherhood.
 - C. Scholars are gaining increased respect for Old Testament. (Moonlight from same source in the sun.)
- II. THE OLD IS THE FORESHADOWING OF THE NEW.
 - A. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," (Gal. 3:24).
 - B. The tabernacle foreshadowed the church.
 1. Outer court and the world.
 2. Altar of burnt offering → fruits meet for repentance.
 3. Laver—sacrifices washed, and priests purified → baptism.
 4. The holy place → the church.
 5. Table of "presence bread" renewed each week → Lord's Supper.
 6. Seven branched candlestick → "Thy word is a lamp . . ."
 7. Altar of incense before the veil → prayer.
 8. The veil before the holy of holies → rent at death of Christ.
 9. Mercy-seat in holy of holies → presence of God in Heaven.
 - C. The priests and Christ.

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D. Sacrifices without blemish → the Passover, fulfilled in Christ.

III. THE OLD IS FULFILLED IN THE NEW, WHICH IS BETTER.

A. In each of the provisions of the Law, there is perfect fulfillment in Christ.

1. Sacrifice.
2. Priesthood.
3. Law and prophets.
4. Sabbath—"I will give you rest."

B. The new is better.

1. Better promises—Forgiveness and eternal life.
2. Put into the mind—"Written not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (II Cor. 3:3)
3. A universal covenant—to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

IV. THE OLD IS FULFILLED AND READY TO PASS AWAY.

"One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18).

A. In Christ the whole law is kept, and its purposes wholly fulfilled.

B. It is a fatal error to try to carry into Christianity the forms of the old: sabbaths, holy seasons, laws of meats, priesthood, sacrifices, and circumcision as a religious rite.

CONCLUSION — An invitation hymn typical of the new covenant—"Just as I Am."

Charlotte Elliott, invalid, unable to help in church bazaar, recalls words of evangelist, "Come to Him just as your are." Writes the hymn. It is published in pamphlet by a friend, and later presented to Miss Elliott by her physician.

John B. Gough's story: A repulsive man next to him in the pew sings "awfully"; asks for line of stanza: "Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind"; says "That I am, blind and a paralytic. The hymn is for me."

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LET US . . .

(Hebrews 10:19-25)

INTRODUCTION — Christians have frequently been like the disciples of the Lord one stormy night on Lake Galilee, tossed and thoroughly frightened. Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. Peter asked to come to Jesus, and did, but “when he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, ‘Lord, save me’” (Matt. 14:30).

- A. So, some thirty years later, the Hebrew Christians.
- B. The Hebrew letter written to encourage and strengthen; it speaks of the *better* relation to God in Christ.
- C. We are priests under the High Priesthood of Christ.
 - 1. This provides new relationship to God—let us draw near.
to self—let us hold fast the profession of faith.
to brothers—let us consider one another.
 - 2. Not entirely separate, but all relate in some way to the “assembling.”
 - a. Congregation—the gathered flock—permanent.
 - b. Convention—the coming together—temporary.

I. LET US DRAW NEAR IN FULL ASSURANCE.

- A. Priestly sanctification.
 - 1. Hearts sprinkled from evil conscience, compared with sprinkling of Aaron and his sons with blood from the altar and with anointing (Exod. 29:21).
 - 2. Bodies washed with pure water, compared with washing Aaron and his sons at the laver at the door of the tent of meeting (Exod. 30:18-21).
- B. Priestly service—Not an honorary position. Now accepted, we assist others to gain acceptance.
 - 1. Draw near to God, as Christians, in preparatory fellowship.
 - 2. Where do you like to be, and with whom?
James L. Kraft (Kraft Cheese): “I go to church on every possible occasion, because as a follower of God I desire to go to God’s house.”

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II. LET US HOLD FAST THE PROFESSION OF OUR FAITH WITHOUT WAVERING.

- A. The profession—declaration—and not just the faith itself, is to be maintained. (Don't just stand there—say something!)

The silent, undeclared faith is not the faith described in the New Testament. *Motivation*—God is faithful; “He cannot deny himself.”

- B. The wavering can be in either of two directions.
1. Weakening, because of faltering faith, going along with unbelievers.
 2. Drifting into mere condemnation of the unbelievers, reacting negatively.
- C. This problem is faced in the church.
1. She must refuse to follow a course of faltering, false doctrine.
 2. She must also refuse to make herself merely a protest assembly, but be firmly declarative.
 3. Thus it has something to offer to the faith of each one attending.

III. LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER.

- A. “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4).

- B. Call forth (provoke) to love and to good works.
(*Provoke* is a word whose meaning has skidded badly under weight of human nature.)

1. To love—the understanding and concern that come with acquaintance.
2. To good works, through example, concern, teaching, instruction.

- B. Neglect not the assembling.

This is part of the mutual consideration! The motivation is not selfish.

- C. Exhorting—What happens on platform sets tone for what people do. Sing! Speak! Pray! Encourage!

CONCLUSION — You see the Day approaching.

— *Then* we'll know how good our meeting was!

PREACHING THROUGH HEBREWS
THE JOY OF THY LORD
(Hebrews 12:1-6)

INTRODUCTION —

- A. Do you really want to “enter into the joy of thy Lord”? It may involve more than you think.
- B. Consider the experience of Him who was the “Author and perfecter of our faith” (ASV).

I. FOR THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM.

- A. That phrase has two different meanings, either or both possible.
 - 1. The Goodspeed translation goes in one direction, saying, “In place of the happiness that belonged to him . . .”
— Thus the “joy” is the heavenly glory Jesus left to endure suffering on earth.
 - 2. *Today’s English Version* goes in the other direction, saying, “Because of the joy that was waiting for him . . .” — Thus the “joy” is the result of the suffering He endured.
 - 3. Most translations leave the choice with the reader, saying, “For the joy . . .”
- B. In context, the passage indicates the “joy” which motivates an athlete to “run with patience the race that is set before” him.
 - 1. We are to run the kind of race that Jesus ran.
 - 2. Psalm 19:5 speaks of the sun’s daily course in which it “rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.”
- C. Jesus knew several kinds of joy, all of which might have been included.
 - 1. His glory in heaven before and after His sojourn on earth.
 - 2. The “strong man’s” joy in going all-out to meet an ultimate challenge.
 - 3. The obedient Son’s joy in pleasing the heavenly Father, and thus accomplishing His purpose on earth.

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4. The joy of bringing other children to God. It is like the joy of a mother in bringing new life into the world (John 16:21). — None of these is the pleasure of self-indulgent luxury, and all have their cost.

II. HE ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME.

- A. We have known our childhood heroes who ignored pain and injury on their way to winning some conflict or competition.
 1. The wounded soldier saving his comrades.
 2. The football player who couldn't remember the last half of a brilliant game.
 3. The basketball player who didn't feel the floor burns and bruises until a soapy shower afterward revealed them.
- B. These are as nothing in contrast with Jesus' willing endurance for our sakes.
 1. Consider Him that endured such contradiction of "sinners against himself" (v. 3).
 2. See Him at Nazareth calmly walking away through the crowd that would have cast Him off the precipice (Luke 4:28-30).
 3. See Him in Gethsemane, delivering Himself into the hands of soldiers (John 18:3-8).
 4. See Him silent in trial, then making His way, bleeding and with spittle on His face, to Calvary.
 5. Hear His prayer for the forgiveness of His tormentors (Luke 23:34).
- C. His followers share in the motivating joy and the suffering.
 1. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). (Compare Nehemiah 8:10: "The joy of the Lord is your strength.")
 2. Peter and John "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41).

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3. "But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad with exceeding joy" (I Pet. 4:13).
— After we have entered into this "joy of the Lord," we shall be prepared to enter that which is to come.

III. HE IS SET DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD.

- A. Thus was answered His prayer for the renewal of His eternal glory: "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5).
- B. It was God's way of recognizing the self-sacrifice of Jesus: "Being found in fashion as a man, [Jesus] humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the time of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:8-11).
- C. His glory in Heaven becomes triumph over His enemies: "Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Heb. 1:13; Psalm 110:1).
- D. His glory in Heaven leads to His return in judgment: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31, 32).

CONCLUSION — The return of a master taking account of his servants is the basis for the symbolic plaudit, "Enter thou into the joy of the Lord" (Matt. 25:21, 23).

Are we ready for it? We shall be, if we have entered into His joy—(1) in going all-out to accomplish His purposes, (2) in serving so as to please the Heavenly Father, and (3) in bringing other children to God.

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SWIFT TO HEAR

(James 1:19-27, cf. Acts 19:33)

INTRODUCTION —

- A. Story of boys waiting for employment in a large office. Routine matters coming over the intercom; then, "Come into office four for employment interview." One goes immediately, and is hired. The rest didn't hear.
- B. So James: "Let every man be swift to hear."
- C. What you get out of a sermon or Sunday School lesson depends as much on your listening as it does on the speaker's message. As with a radio, broadcasting is worthless without reception. You demand a trained minister and teacher—what about trained hearers?

I. TO RECEIVE THE MESSAGE ONE MUST *COME*.
(Cf. "We are all here.")

- A. Obvious? But how often do you come?
- B. If there is something to be gained this week, then why not every week?
- C. If a preacher refused to preach at night, or to hold mid-week services, his refusal would be resented, but as far as most of the members of the church are concerned, there are no such services.
- D. Those who come are on the way to efficient listening.

II. TO RECEIVE WELL ONE MUST *COME IN THE RIGHT ATTITUDE*. (Cf. "Before God.")

- A. "Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not; for they are a rebellious house" (Ezek. 12:2).
- B. If you come wondering what you are going to have to put up with today, you will receive very little.
- C. Why was teaching of G.I.'s in wartime effective?
— They knew it was a life-and-death proposition.
- D. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

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III. TO RECEIVE THE MESSAGE ONE MUST BE ABLE TO HEAR.

- A. The advantage of the center section of seats.
- B. The disadvantage of the choir, should be sympathized with by others.
- C. We hope the hearing aids will help; tell folks about them.

IV. TO RECEIVE THE MESSAGE, PAY ATTENTION.
(Cf. "To hear.")

- A. You are responsible in this matter as much as the speaker is.
- B. You can train yourself to pay attention.
 - 1. Take notes. — "What are the main thoughts?"
 - 2. Discuss with someone else later.
 - 3. Report to someone who didn't hear. A shut-in laments not hearing sermons.
- C. Christ's challenge: "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:23).

V. TO BENEFIT BY THE MESSAGE, DIGEST IT.

(Cf. All things that are commanded thee of God.)

- A. Search the Scriptures daily to see if these things be so.
- B. Is the message shallow? Then go on from there.
- C. Is the message deep? Then get what you can and learn to swim.

VI. TO COMPLETE THE HEARING, "BE YE DOERS OF THE WORD, AND NOT HEARERS ONLY."

- A. "He that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them . . ." (Matt. 7:24-27).
- B. You have heard of Christ. You have heard His command. Then do!

CONCLUSION — "Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice; have mercy also upon me, and answer me" (Psalm 27:7).
God is a good listener! Let's be His children!

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SHOW ME YOUR FAITH
(James 2:14-24)

INTRODUCTION — Radio's child entertainer, "Uncle Don," sings "What are little boys made of? Snakes and snails and puppy dog's tails" and concludes, "I don't really believe that."

You know that before he says it; he doesn't act as though he believed it.

Some "Christians" quote their creeds and sing their songs in the same fashion.

I. SHOW ME THY FAITH APART FROM THY WORKS
— it can't be done!

A. James was writing concerning some who had twisted the meaning of Romans 3:28, "We conclude that a man is justified without the deeds of the law."

1. *Faith* here is inclusive: "We are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39).

2. Works of the law are the rituals of the old order.

3. But some, then as now, were teaching, "Only believe, and be saved."

B. Even those who teach that doctrine do not believe it!
Illustration—A preacher argues that faith-alone saves; then refuses to accept into membership of the church the young man he considers not morally straight!

C. Faith and life will find a common level; life rising to faith, or faith declining to the level of life.

II. "I BY MY WORKS WILL SHOW THEE MY FAITH."
You can't help it!

A. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

B. "What kind of a man is he? What kind of God does he worship?"

C. We show our faith by our confession.

1. The words carry the message.

2. The act gives it meaning. We believe in Him who confessed the good confession before Pilate.

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3. Yet even this is not enough: See Mark 1:23, 24: The devils believe, and tremble.
- D. We show our faith by our baptism. Our faith is in Christ.
1. The act declares our faith in Him who died, was buried, arose "for me." "We are buried with Him by baptism into death" (Rom. 6:4).
 2. It is an act of faith in His cleansing power. "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).
 3. It is the symbol of the loss of self in Him. "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).
 4. It declares our faith in His power to give new life. "Like as Christ was raised . . . so we should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).
- E. We show our faith by our faithfulness in the Supper.
1. "Ye do show forth the Lord's death until He comes" (I Cor. 11:26).
 2. Each one partakes—His death is for each one.
 3. He gave His body and blood.
 4. He is coming again.
- F. We show our faith by Christian growth.
1. How big is your Lord? Remember the fable of the toad that swelled till he burst trying to be as big as an ox? "I am trying to show what my Lord is like."
- G. We show our faith by forgiving others. —"Even as God for Christ's sake forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).
- H. By generosity—in the name of Him who gave to all life and breath, and all things.
- I. By kindness—in the name of Him who touched blind eyes and made see.
 - J. By justice—tempered with His mercy.
- K. By purity—"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and the spirit of God dwelleth in you" (I Cor. 3:16).

CONCLUSION —

Your faith is known this morning—"Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS IN THE MINISTRY

(James 3)

INTRODUCTION — James 3 sounds like an un-recruiting sermon for Christian service.

- A. It came from a man who had been preaching Christ for thirty years; he was not quitting; he was guiding!
 - B. Don't accept the responsibilities lightly; if you do, you'll never meet them!
 - C. Three paragraphs in the chapter deal with three hazards in the preaching-teaching ministry.
- I. THE WEIGHT OF RESPONSIBILITY (vv. 1, 2).
- A. This ministry leaves one without excuse in judgment.
 - 1. Having given God's teaching to others, he is bound to it without compromise. "You are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things" (Rom. 2:1, NASB; see also Rom. 2:21-23).
 - 2. (The teacher cannot indulge in the excuse of the youngster who tattled, saying "They're older, and know better, and I don't.")
 - B. This ministry deals with irreplaceable values.
 - 1. (The highway marker at the edge of town admonished motorists to "Watch carefully for our children; they are not replaceable.")
 - 2. Jesus was even more severe: "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea (Matt. 18:6, NASB).
 - C. This ministry deals with unchangeable values.
 - 1. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" (Luke 21:33).
 - 2. We have not the book-publisher's privilege of bringing out new editions to correct the mistakes in the old.

PREACHING THROUGH JAMES

II. THE WAY OF WORDS (vv. 2-12).

- A. The preacher's basic tool is the tricky tongue.
 - 1. It is that with which he is most likely to offend.
 - 2. It is the implement last conquered in development of Christian maturity.
- B. The tongue has awesome power (vv. 3-5).
 - 1. Its power for evil is described.
 - a. Impure words spread defilement like a contagion.
 - b. Vicious words start fires of destruction.
 - 2. Its power for good is basic to prophets and apostles.
 - a. Jesus relied on the spoken word (demonstrated) for His own ministry.
 - b. The very book of James is most like a transcript of a spoken message.
 - 3. Part of our danger is that we so fear saying wrong things that we say nothing, and so partake of the wicked servant's condemnation (Matthew 25:24-30).
- C. The tongue is most difficult to control (vv. 7, 8).
 - 1. "Slips of the tongue" are familiar embarrassments.
 - 2. More serious are the undisciplined words that are remembered long after we no longer mean what they said in haste.
(Here is the answer to the one who pridefully is "honest enough to say what he thinks." How long will he think that way?)
 - 3. The skilled speaker, like the skilled carpenter or dressmaker, will "measure twice, and cut once."
- D. The tongue is capable of vast contradictions (vv. 9-12).
 - 1. Blessing God means little if we curse God's people.
 - 2. Prayers in church are too often negated by nagging and scolding at home.
 - 3. Lying — that shift of gears between thought and word — is the worst of contradictions.

III. THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD (vv. 13-18).

—This gains significance with development of the all-dominant-pastor system.

- A. It is praised by men as a way to succeed.

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

1. A noted "pastor" boasts that he is not hampered by any such things as elders, to thwart his program.
 2. The world knows that "you have to have an authority figure." (Authority figure Jim Jones succeeded marvelously all the way to Jonestown.)
 3. The world knows that trusted colleagues will leave you alone in trouble as Paul (II Tim. 4:9-16).
 4. The world knows that trusted colleagues will betray and deny you, as Jesus was betrayed and denied.
- B. It is condemned by Scripture as "jealousy and selfish ambition" (NASB).
1. It is the plague that followed the very apostles until Christ died.
 2. James calls it earthly—it's success is temporal and material. James calls it sensual—there is selfish pleasure in its sense of power. James calls it devilish—as Satan promised the world, for worship of him (Matt. 4:8-10).
- C. It is contrasted with the "wisdom that is from above."
1. Pure—singleminded to the glory of God, as John the Baptist was.
 2. Peaceable and persuadable.
 3. A living quality expressed in *meekness* and *mercy*.
 4. Without pretense (to infallibility) or partiality (giving favors for advantage.)

CONCLUSION — "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine" (I Tim. 5:17).

(A tour group went a considerable distance to see a recently finished crucifix, and to honor the sculptor who had carved it in stone. But consider: The sculptor worked in cold stone; the preacher-teacher works in living souls. The sculptor used tools of true steel; the teacher must use the tricky tongue. The sculptor's thrust was with balanced mallet; the teacher's his Christlike life. The sculptor carved the physical likeness of a dead Jesus; the teacher molds the spiritual image of our living Lord.)

Double honor to him who braves the hazards and accomplishes the task!