Articles by Earl Miller

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The Epistle of James (October 1968)

From Food for the Flock, October 1968.

Likeness to Christ, Life's Goal

God has a design for each life, and that design is to be conformed to the image of His Son. The life Christ lived in this world is the supreme ideal for any life, and God's design for our lives is to bring them as near to that ideal as is possible. Patience, the ability of one who has faith in Christ to remain alive under pressure, comes as near to reaching that goal as anything else can. Human nature, being what it is, requires pressing burdens, testings, trials, etc. to reach that goal.

The word "faith" occurs for the first time in chapter one and verse three. It is used 16 times in the entire Epistle. Faith is, therefore, the theme of the Epistle. i.e. faith of a definite kind. Peter calls this faith more precious than gold which perishes (I Peter 1:7). And faith that is tried, Peter says, stands approved before God at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Paul On Pressing Burdens

Paul also suggests in Romans 5:3-5 that Christians should glory in pressing burdens, because pressing burdens will produce patience, and patience, proven character, and proven character, hope. That seems to be the royal highway to likeness to Christ: pressing burdens, patience, proven character, hope, likeness to Christ. It is said, "Adversity breaks some people, but others break records." One who has faith in Christ can

more readily break records in adversity, than one who does not have faith in Christ.

The Ultimate Goal of Trials

Returning again to James, in the fourth verse he mentions the ultimate goal that trials are designed to achieve. He says, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be entire, wanting nothing." In other words, James as good as says, "Let this patience-producing-process continue until such a degree of perseverence is developed that you may become men of proven character." That is the Ultimate goal which all the trials of life are designed to achieve. So, beloved brethren, do not fret when some calamity overwhelms you. A priceless legacy is without doubt hidden in it. Be on the alert, anticipate it, and seek to recognize the concealed blessing.

Lack of Wisdom

Should someone lack wisdom while passing through this patience-producing-process, he has an inexhaustible supply at his command. Christ is the wisdom of God (I Cor. 1:24), and He dwells in the believer, so he has an inexhaustible supply of wisdom within. James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." God is anxious to give wisdom, in fact, it is His nature to give; He cannot do otherwise.

What Is Wisdom?

Wisdom is an attribute of God; it is not native in man. Wisdom cannot be acquired; it must be bestowed. Socrates, the father of philosophy, refused to be called

wise, or even to be known as a master of wisdom. To him only God was wise. He preferred to be known as a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, which is the meaning of the word. Wisdom is described in the apocryphal book of Enoch, as descending from Heaven to earth, and, being rejected by man, returned to Heaven to await the Messianic Age when she will be poured out in her fullness on the elect.

We are to ask God for wisdom when we need it, but we must ask in faith without inward doubts. It is useless to pray for wisdom, and then harbor inward doubts that we will receive it. Such a doubter is likened to a wave of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. He who doubts need not expect to receive anything from the Lord. He is a man of divided loyalities, and is unstable in every way.

The Prayer of Faith

So, my beloved brethren, should some pressing burden or some hard trial overtake you to the extent that you are perplexed, and you hardly know which way to turn, knowing that you must make a decision, and that your own welfare, as well as that of others may depend on the decision you make, if such be your case, just ask God in simple faith to give you the wisdom to make the right decision. In asking, do not forget to thank God for giving you the wisdom. Do not question in your heart that God has granted the request. Confidently go your way knowing that your request has been granted, as Jesus said in Mark 11:24, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." That is praying in faith, and you can go forth with confidence knowing that wisdom will be at your command when it is needed.

Then when you take up the problem, analyze every possible solution, appraising every facet that has merit, and there will come to you an inward consciousness of what is the right decision. You make the decision, and as its fruits unfold, you will realize that the decision you made was the best possible.

Humble Circumstances

With the ninth verse James begins to pin point some of the trials of life. He says, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted." Putting it in another form, "Moreover, let the brother in humble circumstances boast in his exaltation." Circumstances of life sometimes take a heavy toll. Financial straits beyond our control, often cut deeply into our savings, business, or livelihood, and we find ourselves in humble circumstances. What is one in this circumstance to do? James says, "Let him rejoice." Rejoice in what? In his height? In his exaltation? Spiros Zodhiates in his excellent book The Work of Faith, page 46, beautifully expresses the meaning of the Greek in the phrase translated "Let him rejoice." He says, "It is to loudly profess something you have a right to be proud of, the companionship of God in your trials, which while you are so low makes you so high." Truly, one can rejoice in humble circumstances.

The Rich Brother and Humility

The next verse brings the rich brother into view. He is to rejoice in his humility, not in his riches. He is a Christian brother whom the Lord has allowed to prosper in the acquisition of wealth. Rich men, as a rule, do not glory in their humility, rather in their wealth, in their social position, or the power inherent in wealth. But the rich

man who has faith in Christ does not glory in these things, but rather in his humility. Such is the behavior of saving faith in one who has acquired considerable of this world's goods.

It is not an easy matter for rich men to be humble. Yet there are Christian rich men who by their appearance and conduct hide the fact that they are rich. Their bearing is like that of the ordinary man. In this they have something to rejoice. Wealth is nothing to glory in; it is likened to the flower of the grass which flourishes today, but tomorrow the withering sun scorches the grass and the flower falls off. Riches can pass away as easily as the flower can fade. In the stock market crash in the late '20's many millionaires became paupers over night. Without humility, they had nothing left to glory in. Humility cannot fade away; it remains when riches fail. Rich men also have pressing burdens, but if they have cultivated the Christian grace of humility, they are better prepared to remain alive under pressures.

The Crown of Life

James concludes his matchless treatise on the trials of life by saying, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he will recieve the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." The crown of life is held out to those who successfully endure life's trials. They stand approved before God and are crowned with the crown of life.

We append here a translation of the above text in perhaps a more readable and understandable form:

"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ; to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings. (1). Look

forward, my brethren, to that complete, all-embracing joy when you fall into diverse testings; recognizing that the trying of your faith produces patience. But let that patience-producing-process continue until such a degree of perseverence is produced that you become men of proven character (2-4). Should one of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who gives liberally to all men without reproaching for the lack, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith without doubtings in himself, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. Let not such a man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord. For a man of divided loyalties is unstable in every way (5-8). Moreover, let the brother in humble circumstances rejoice in his exaltation. On the other hand, let the rich brother rejoice in his humility; because riches, like the flower of the grass, will pass away. For when the sun is risen with scorching heat, the grass withers and the flower falls off, and its goodly appearance and comeliness perish. So shall the rich man wear himself out in his acquisition of wealth (9-11). Happy is the man who stands his guard in the face of trials; for when he is approved, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who continue to love Him" (12).

The Epistle of James (May–June 1971)

From Ministry in Focus, May–June 1971.

Editor's note: Earl Miller continues his excellent exposition of the Epistle of James. He presents in these articles the experiential aspect of Christianity. We recommend a close study of each paragraph, and an application of its teaching to personal life and testimony.

James 5:7-12

James, writing to his beloved brethren who were scattered abroad because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, refers to the coming of Christ as an added incentive to be patient in their trials.

The Parousia of Christ

The word James uses for the coming of Christ is "parousia." This word is used 24 times in the New Testament concerning the coming of Christ. The primary meaning of the word is 'presence.' It refers not only to the moment of Christ's return, but to the entire period of His presence. Thus when Christ comes at the Rapture and we are caught up to meet Him in the air, we will be with Him in the heavenlies during the time of the Tribulation Period on earth. The judgment seat of Christ, where all the saints are judged as servants, will take place during this time. The parousia of Christ, therefore, refers to the entire time we are with Him in the heavenlies before He returns to the earth to set up His kingdom.

The Long-Suffering of Saints

James begins this portion by saying, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." The word "patience" used here is not the same word as was used in the first chapter. In the first chapter the word was "hupomonee" which we saw meant the ability to remain alive under the pressure of trials. But in the fifth chapter the word is "makrothumeesate." The meaning of this word, according to Zodhiates in his excellent book THE PATIENCE OF HOPE, page 77, is "a holding out of the mind before it gives room to action or passion - generally passion." Thus, the word should be translated "long-suffering" rather than "patience." Patience, as the word is used in the first chapter, refers to things, to the circumstances of life. But the word used in the fifth chapter refers, not to things or circumstances, but to persons. We are to exercise patience with respect to circumstances, such as the trials of life, but we are to be long-suffering toward those who bring the trials upon us. James, thus, exhorts his brethren to be long-suffering toward their oppressors until the coming of Christ.

Patience and Long-Suffering

Patience and long-suffering are two Christian graces enjoined upon the people of God, but only long-suffering is attributed to God. God has no need of patience, for trials in the circumstances of life do not enter into His experience, but He is very long-suffering toward man. Man may resist Him, fight against Him, or perpetuate persectuion against His saints, yet God does not strike them down; He is long-suffering. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth. We sometimes wonder why God

does not stop the cruel oppression of ungodly men, but He is long-suffering toward them, giving them every opportunity to repent. Patience, therefore, has to do with things, the circumstances of life, while long-suffering has to do with persons. Since long-suffering is characteristic of God, James urges his brethren to be long-suffering toward their oppressors.

The Imminent Coming of Christ

The imminent coming of Christ was the hope of God's people even in that day. It is still the hope of God's people today. When James wrote, it was some 35 or 40 years since Christ left them to ascend into Heaven, but before He left, He promised to come again to receive them to Himself, that where He is they might be also. They were expectantly looking for Him to come, and perhaps wondering why He delayed so long, so James admonishes them to patiently wait for His coming. Today, 1900 years later, Christ still has not come. But we have signs on the political, economic, and religious horizons which point to the near return of Christ, signs which they did not have in that day.

The Farmer

"Behold the farmer waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain." The farmer waiting for the fruit of the earth is the simile that James uses for the Christian waiting for the coming of the Lord. The farmer sows the seed and then waits for the fruit. The seed does not come from himself as a source, but from the earth, a source outside himself. He only sows the seed into the ground, then through the process of germination, death

and resurrection take place; the seed dies as a seed that fruit may be produced. The farmer waits patiently for this process to provide him with the precious fruit of the earth.

In like manner, when Christ came the first time, He finished a work which provides redemption for everyone who believes. Now the good news of salvation by faith in Christ is preached in all the world. When we first believed, the seed was sown in our hearts. Then through the process of death and resurrection (dying with Christ and rising with Him), we mature as sons of God. And now we patiently wait for His coming. As the farmer can do nothing to hasten the harvest, so the Christian can do nothing to hasten the coming of the Lord. Like the farmer, he patiently waits for His coming.

Establish Your Hearts

The eighth verse says, "Be patient establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth near." Discouragement comes easily to the people of God when trials are sore. Job cursed the day of his affliction. Sometimes because of adverse circumstances, one is tempted to pull up stakes and move to another place, hoping thereby to start over again and through faith attain success in a new place. The pasture always looks greener on the other side of the fence. But the disciples, after toiling all night without a single catch of fish, were told the next morning to let the net down on the right side of the boat, and immediately they caught 153 great fish in their net. They did not go to another place, success came in the same lake, and in the same waters where they had fished all night without success. So with the child of God; he may think that the luscious pasture

is somewhere else, but by patiently waiting he finds the best picking in the place where he is. It was the same old net in the same old place that yielded the fish.

The word for patience here is the same word as in the previous verse, and should really be translated long-suffering. The word "establish" comes from a Greek word meaning "to prop." We are to prop up our hearts, and from this we get the word "establish." An established heart is a propped up heart. Since the verb is in the active voice, it implies that it is something we can do ourselves. Of course, when we attempt to establish our hearts, God is working behind the scenes to bring success to our endeavours. Passivity is good up to a certain point, but there come times when we need to take action ourselves. We are commanded to "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12), and to "keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21). These are things we are commanded to do ourselves. But you might say, "How can one keep himself in the love of God?" You look at your puny self and think such a thing is impossible. True! Yet God did not put those words in His Book just to take up space. If you become so passive that you will not even try to do the impossible, of course, you will not be kept in the love of God. But if you attempt the seemingly impossible, you will marvel at the way you are kept in the love of God. You wonder how that can be. God knows; you don't need to know. He works behind the scenes, as the poet has said;

"Truth forever on the scaffold;

Wrong forever on the throne,

Yet that scaffold sways the future,

And behind the dim unknown,

Standeth God within the shadows,

Keeping watch above His own."

Now why should we prop up or establish our hearts? Because the coming of the Lord is drawing near. As time passes on, people scoff at the coming of the Lord. They say, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the begining of creation" (2 Pet. 3:4). The longer His coming is delayed, evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse. Inadvertently Christians go along with the crowd and become careless in regards to the coming of the Lord. In view of this, we should be diligent in establishing our hearts, for the coming of the Lord is much nearer now that it was then.

Grudge Not

The Greek word translated "grudge" is "stenazate." According to Arndt & Gingerich's Lexicon, the word means, "to sigh, to groan because of undesirable circumstances, or to groan against or complain against someone." In this particular incident James uses the word in reference to those who were complaining against others. Undesirable circumstances have borne down on these Christians so that they began to complain one against the other. So, James says, "Grudge not against one another, brethren, lest ye be condemned; behold the judge standeth at the door." The Greek has the word "door" in the plural. "Behold, the judge standeth at the doors." Does this mean that the judge, who is Christ, is standing at the verge of His coming again? Or does it mean that He is standing at each individual heart to judge the attitude of that heart? With the word "door" being in the plural, and with the

expression "lest ye be judged" all seem to point to the parousia of Christ where at the judgment seat of Christ the attitude of every heart will be openly expressed.

The Epistle of James (July–August 1971)

From Ministry in Focus, July–August 1971.

Editor's note: Earl Miller continues his excellent exposition of the Epistle of James. He presents in these articles the experiential aspect of Christianity. We recommend a close study of each paragraph, and an application of its teaching to personal life and testimony.

Prophets Exemplify Long-Suffering

James brings in compelling reason to bolster his admonition to his brethren to be long-suffering to each other. He refers to the prophets and to Job for illustration of long-suffering and patience. He says, "Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of long-suffering and patience. Behold, we count them happy who endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." The prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord are worthy show-pieces to set before these persecuted brethren. The prophets suffered affliction because of their faithfulness to the Lord. Yet these prophets were long-suffering toward their persecutors. It is interesting to notice that the word applied to the prophets is long-suffering and not patience, while for Job it is patience and not long-suffering. In Job's case it was things or circumstances of life that caused his suffering, and he manifested remarkable patience through it all. But the prophets were suffering at the hands of men, so in their case it was long-suffering and not patience. With

these two illustrations, James clinches his admonition to his brethren to be longsuffering toward those who were responsible for their suffering, and at the same time to be patient in all their trials and afflictions. The coming of the Lord will right all things.

Swear Not

James closes the portion dealing with the coming of the Lord with the words, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by Heaven, nor by earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, lest ye fall into condemnation." While this verse does not bear directly on the coming of the Lord, it does bear practical admonition as to the manner of life of those who do anticipate the coming of the Lord.

It is a bit difficult to arrive at the correct meaning of this verse. Some take it to mean that all oaths are forbidden. Yet God Himself used the oath to bind promises He made to men like Abraham. In the sixth chapter of Hebrews when God made a promise to Abraham, He confirmed it by an oath. And since He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself that the promise would be fulfilled. Paul used the oath for confirmation when he said, "God is my witness" (Phil. 1:8), and, "Behold, before God, I lie not" (Gal. 1:20). Paul did not hesitate to use the oath for confirmation, so James evidently was not referring to that kind of oath. He, no doubt, was referring to the careless way in which the name of God was used to give credence to what was being said. Theme [?] people like to interject the name of God in the statements they make to impress their listeners that they are telling the truth. This, I believe, was what

James was condemning. Let your yes be yes, and your no, no. To add more for credence is condemning.

* * *

7-11

Be longsuffering, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient for it until it receives the early and late rains. May you also be patient, having your hearts established, for the coming of the Lord has drawn near. Do not grumble one against another, brethren, lest you be condemned; behold, the judge is standing at the doors. Take the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, as an example, brethren, of patience and long-suffering. Behold, we call those happy who are steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and saw the purpose of the Lord, how He is very compassionate and merciful.

12

But above all my brethren, do not swear at all; neither by Heaven, nor by earth, nor by any other oath. But let your yes be yes, and your no, no, that ye fall not into condemnation.

The Prayer of Faith (July–August 1971)

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The Prayer of Faith

Selected

James 5:13-30

We come now to the last portion of the book of James. There seemed to be a number of subjects yet in the mind of James that he had not touched on in his Epistle so in these last few verses he considers them together rather briefly. Among these subjects are: the healing of the sick, the anointing of oil, the prayer of faith, the confession of sins, and the restoration of an erring brother. There are a variety of opinions on some of these subjects; we do not intend to go into detail but to briefly point out the salient facts without entering into controversy.

Affliction

This portion begins with the words, “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms.” The word translated “affliction” literally, according to Arndt & Gingerich’s Lexicon, means “suffering misfortune.” This suffering misfortune is not suffering from inward disease, but comes from an outward source, pressure from a hostile world. The statement is put in the form of a question, but we know that the original text had no punctuation marks at all. The quotation marks were put in centuries later by some

man. It seems unlikely that James asked the question for information, because he knew that many of his brethren were suffering affliction,. His purpose in the first chapter was to encourage those who were suffering affliction. James is, rather, giving instructions to those who are afflicted to pray.

The Greek uses several words for prayer, and all of them are translated into English by the word “prayer.” This particular word that James uses here is restricted entirely to sacred uses; it is prayer made to God. Many people seemingly never think of prayer until some misfortune strikes them. God must resort to some strange circumstances sometimes to revive some of His children. They forget so easily until the pressure of misfortune drives them to prayer. It is better to be in the habit of prayer before misfortune strikes, then prayer will not seem strange.

“Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms.” The meaning of the word translated “merry” includes in it “the well-being of the soul, of life principle, or of mind.” This can be true in spite of affliction from a hostile world. There are Christians who are inwardly joyful while bearing affliction from the outside world. This joy cannot be touched by circumstances of life.

Is Any Sick?

The 14th verse reads, “Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church.” The question mark is also used in this verse, and again James is not asking the question for information; there is sickness among Christians as well as there is among non-Christians. James is using this method to give instructions to those who are sick. They are to call for the elders of the

church. It is the duty of the elders to visit the sick, but this sickness may not have been reported. So in case that the elders are not informed, the one who is sick should call for the elders to come to them.

The Annointing with Oil

When the elders come to the sick one, they are “to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.” There are many differing opinions about the anointing with oil, but we shall refrain from entering into controversy with anyone, and only confine ourselves to what we feel is the correct interpretation of the passage. We are convinced that this is not a religious ordinance enjoined upon the church. Our reason for this conviction is the meaning of the Greek word used here for “anoint.” The word is “aleiphoo,” and this is the secular or wordly word for “anoint.” The Greek has another word for “anoint,” which is “chrioo,” and this word is used in a sacred sense. The word Christ comes from the root of this Greek word. “Chrioo” is the word used when God anointed His Son; it is used of David when he was anointed as king; it is used when the prophets were anointed by God; and it is the word used for Christians when they are anointed with the Holy Spirit. But James does not use the word “chrioo,” he uses the word “aleiphoo.” The word “aleiphoo” means “to rub, to oil, or to massage.” Perhaps a quotation from the book THE PATIENCE OF HOPE, page 123, by Spiros Zodhiates, a native Greek, would be helpful in understanding the word. He says, “Perhaps a bit of etymology and history of the word “aliephoo,” “to oil,” would be helpful in more fully understanding what

James meant by it in this difficult verse. It comes from the root “lipos,” which means “grease.” It is therefore the verb which means to apply oil to something. In ancient times, for instance, people rubbed their bodies with oil after a bath. Also the Athletes of Greece used to have their bodies rubbed with oil to prepare them for the gymnastic events they were to enter. Therefore, metaphorically the verb meant “to stimulate to encourage through the application of oil.”

The word that James uses, therefore, rules out the fact that he is referring to a sacrament or rite with religious significance. He refers to the common practice of massaging the body with olive oil for the relief of physical suffering. It is still a common practice among the Greeks to massage the body with olive oil to relieve suffering, and those who have had their bodies so massaged report that the relief it affords is almost unbelievable.

It is the writer’s firm conviction that the anointing that James refers to is the rubbing or massaging the body with oil, not just a few drops, for medicinal purposes according to the custom of the day. While, no doubt, the sick one referred to was beyond the restorative power of oil, it was still to be applied in the name of the Lord for what relief it could give. The elders were to pray over him the prayer of faith, and the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. It is the prayer of faith that has the emphasis, not the anointing of oil. It is said that at one time J. N. Darby and J. G. Bellett carried a small bottle of oil with them, and often when they prayed for the sick, they anointed them with a few drops of oil. They had seen remarkable results and their fame spread abroad more than they liked, so they

discontinued the use of oil and only prayed for the sick. They found the results without the oil as remarkable as with the oil. They found that it was not the application of oil but the prayer of faith that heals the sick.

The Epistle of James (September–October 1971)

From Ministry in Focus, September–October 1971.

Editor's note: This is the concluding article of Earl Miller's exposition of the Epistle of James. We have enjoyed this practical ministry. What a challenge to personal piety!

Does Sin Cause Sickness?

Sickness has caused much apprehension among some people because they feel that they are suffering because of personal sins they have committed. This is not true! We are living in mortal bodies which are subject to death. A body that is subject to death is also subject to sickness. As a general rule sickness is not caused by personal sins, but there are exceptions to any rule, and the same holds true of this one. There is Syphilus, which is caused by the sin of immorality, and lung cancer is caused by smoking cigarettes, etcetera. So there are some sicknesses caused by personal sin, but those suffering from them know they are to blame. Other than that, don't blame yourself for sickness you suffer.

Confession

After having given instructions covering the sick, James begins with the confession of sins. He says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The word "faults" should be "sins" for it is the same word that is otherwise translated sins. The elders are not mentioned here, so

the confession of sins does not necessarily need to be made to the elders. It says, "one to another." There is no designation made as to who the other is. It was just a private confession of sins to one another.

But this simple private confession of sins was rather early shifted to the public meeting of Christians. Thus, the public meeting became the place where penitents confessed their sins. This custom continued until A.D. 250 when, for the sake of convenience and to prevent embarrassment, an outstandingly spiritual elder was designated to hear the confessions of the penitents. This was practised by the Novations and continued for about 140 years. It was discontinued in A.D. 391 because of a case of gross immorality between the confessor and the confessee. Then in A.D. 450, Pope Leo I in a circular forbade public confession, and reinstituted the confession to a priest who had the right to prescribe penance and to forgive the sin. But confession was still on a voluntary basis, and continued so for a long time. But in A.D. 1215 Pope Innocent III decreed that every member of the church should make confession at least once a year. Forty-five years later, A.D. 1260, confession was made a sacrament of the church. But it was not until A.D. 1642 that confession was introduced in full form as it is to this day in the Roman Catholic Church. Thus for the first 250 years of church history, the church was free from an appointed confessor to hear the confessions of the penitents. It took another 1390 years for the confessional to become established as it is today. The history of the confessional is a sad departure from the written Word of God. Beginning only as a convenience, it developed through 13 centuries into the full-fledged confessional as it is practised today.

Fervent Prayer

"The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth (accomplishes) much." Praying one for another with the confession of sins accomplishes a great deal. The sick may be healed by it. James emphasizes the fact by referring to Elijah, who was a man of like nature as we are. He prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it did not rain for three and one half years. Then he prayed earnestly that it might rain, and it did rain. Since this was true of Elijah, it can be just as true of any man in any age.

Conclusion

The Epistle ends with these words, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." There is always danger of one straying or erring from the truth. When this happens, it is the duty of another spiritual brother to restore such an one. If he succeeds in turning him back, he will not only have saved a soul from death, but will also have covered a multitude of sins.

The Epistle of James (Part 1) (May 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 5, May 1968.

Does Paul Contradict James?

Does it seem sacrilegious to ask such a question? Should two writers of Holy Scripture contradict each other? From the viewpoint that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, the answer is an emphatic NO. God does not contradict Himself. But some have implied that a contradiction does exist.

"The Epistle of Straw"

Martin Luther called James "The Epistle of Straw." He rejected it as inspired and denied its rightful place in the sacred Canon. To understand his position, one needs but a bit of sober reflection on the hard bondage of salvation by works to which he was subjected. He was so sincere and devoted to the rigours of self-denial and the chastisement of the body to reach inward sin, that he almost wrecked his health. When he was saved by grace through faith, he rejoiced greatly and revived the long-lost doctrine of justification by faith. After revelling for some time in his new-found freedom, he became alarmingly shocked when he read the Epistle of James. His first reaction was that it was as worthless as straw, hence he called it the "Epistle of Straw." Without carefully studying the Epistle to discover what the Spirit of God might have in it for him, he rejected it.

A Veritable Gold Mine

The Epistle of James is a veritable gold mine. It is one of the most practical books in the Bible; and, one might add, one of the most neglected. Not many sermons are preached on this book, and it is seldom the theme for Bible Conference discussions. The resulting loss is ours, for it contains unvarnished truth so applicable to our day.

Seeming Contradictions

A superficial reading of the Epistle might cause one to suspect that a conflict does exist between the teachings of Paul and James on the subject of justification. Paul, in Romans 3:28, says, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” Then James, (2:24) says, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only.” Paul uses Abraham as an Old Testament illustration of justification by faith without works when he says in Romans 4:1-3, “What shall we say, then, that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the Scripture, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.” James also uses Abraham as an Old Testament illustration of justification by works when he says in 2:21-23, “Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works when he offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God.”

Not Contradictory But Complementary

A superficial reading of the above passages may cause one, as it did Martin Luther, to suspect that a contradiction does exist between these two writers on the subject of justification. But we are not satisfied with the superficial; we want to dive beneath the surface to understand what caused these two men to write as they did. We can confidently say that there is no contradiction here. A careful study of their respective writings will reveal that instead of contradicting, they complement each other. Or as someone has said, “James and Paul are not standing face-to-face fighting each other, but back-to-back fighting opposite foes.”

Justification In Sight Of Men Or God?

A simple way to harmonize this apparent difference in teaching is to say that James is writing about justification in the sight of men, while Paul is writing about justification in the sight of God. However, the simple way is not always the correct way. We maintain that both James and Paul are writing about justification in the sight of God, and, even so, there is still no contradiction in their respective writings. There are two valid reasons for maintaining this position.

First Reason

In the first place, why should God devote one book out of the sixty-six in the Bible to prove justification to man? What is man that God should need to prove anything to him. There are eleven major heterogeneous religions in the world, so there is hardly any point in proving anything to man with such widely differing views on religion. Then so far as Christians are concerned, they

differ widely on Baptism, Eschatology, and even Soteriology (Calvinism and Arminianism). There is not even a unanimity of opinion among Christians on the subject of justification. God has, therefore, no need to prove justification to man.

Second Reason

Then in the second place, the two illustrations James uses to prove justification by works are of such a nature that men would condemn rather than justify the ones performing such acts. Who, among men, would justify Abraham for offering his son as a burnt offering upon an altar? Or who, among men, would justify Rahab for harboring two spies from an enemy camp and helping them escape capture? No one would. But God can see something in those two acts that man cannot see, therefore, out of those two acts Abraham and Rahab stand justified before Him.

So, then, since both James and Paul are writing about justification in the sight of God, how can we reconcile the apparent contradictory statements they do make on this subject? To arrive at a satisfactory answer to this question, we need to know something about the authors, the time in which they wrote, and the occasion for their writing. We are sure all apparent contradictions will disappear when this is done.

Who Wrote James?

We ask then, who wrote the Epistle bearing this name? There are three men who are of note in the New Testament bearing the name of James. First, there is James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee and Salome (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19; Luke 5:10). He and his

brother, John, were called by Jesus while they were mending nets in their father's boat. These two brothers and Peter seemed to be intimates of Jesus and were present on several occasions that the rest of the twelve were not present, such as, the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37), the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1), and the inner recess of the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). This James was put to death by Herod (Acts 12:2) too early in the history of the Church to have written this Epistle.

Then there is James, the Less. He was another of the twelve apostles. He was the son of Alphaeus and Mary (Matt. 10:3; 27:56; Mark 15: 40) — this Mary was the sister of our Lord's mother. Nothing is recorded about him other than that he was one of the twelve, and this would rule him out as the author of this book.

Lastly, there is James, the brother of our Lord (Gal. 1:19), the son of Joseph and Mary. If the sons of Joseph and Mary (Matt. 13:55) are named in the order of their birth, James would be next to Jesus in age, for he is named first. It is possible he was not more than two years younger than Jesus. He was not one of the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus, and was not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ in the early part of His ministry (John 7:5). Just when he became a believer, we are not told. But when he became a believer, he put his whole soul into the work for Christ. His other brothers also became believers of Jesus and are numbered with the apostles and others who were gathered in the upper room for prayer after the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:14). James was honored by a personal appearance to him of Christ after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). He acquired the title of apostle in much the same way that Paul and Barnabas

did. He occupied a prominent place in the leadership of the early church at Jerusalem, and presided, so it is assumed, over the conference held at Jerusalem (Acts 15) where the status of the Gentiles in the Church was taken up. At least, he summarized the findings of the conference and wrote that historic document which welcomed the Gentiles into the Church and freed them from bondage to the Jewish law. Every indication points to this James as the author of the Epistle of James.

The Epistle of James (Part 2) (June-July 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 6, June-July 1968.

Date Of Writing

To determine the date of the writing of this Epistle, we must rely heavily on internal evidence. There is no mention made in the entire Epistle of the Church as the Body of Christ, and neither is the salvation of the Gentiles mentioned. This points to an early writing of this letter, certainly before Paul's active ministry to the Gentiles began. It would therefore have to be written before the Conference at Jerusalem where James himself welcomed the Gentiles into the Church. That Conference convened about A.D. 48 or 49. It is inconceivable that there should be no mention made of the Gentiles if the letter had been written after that Conference had convened.

Then, James wrote "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." This scattering took place when Saul of Tarsus made havoc of the church at Jerusalem scattering abroad the Christians, except for the apostles. This persecution is dated at about A.D. 35 or 36. Therefore, sometime between the persecution raised by Saul of Tarsus and the Conference at Jerusalem, this letter was written. It is difficult to fix an exact year, but A. D. 40 to 45 comes about as near to the time as the evidence we have on hand justifies.

Occasion For Writing.

The occasion for writing this letter is fraught with interest. Some of the Christian Jews who had been scattered abroad in the persecution returned to Jerusalem for visits and recounted the many trials and difficulties these scattered Christians were subjected to. They also reported some forms of misconduct practised by some of them. Jesus may have had opportunity to hear these reports with his own ears. The conduct of some of these Jews who professed to be Christians, certainly was not becoming the faith they professed to hold. The thought that faith in Christ should be brought into ill-repute by those who professed to have such faith, cut James to his heart. He felt very keenly the need of something tangible that would define the behaviour of saving faith in those who professed to have it. Faith is intangible, it cannot be seen nor touched, but it cannot be hidden. It will manifest itself in some way. The burden, then, of this letter is not to define faith, as such, but to show how it will behave itself in a world hostile to it. The criteria set forth in this letter will easily distinguish those who have saving faith from those who only profess to have it. It is this kind of faith that forms the theme of this Epistle. Works are relative to saving faith; they are produced by it. It is important to notice that the works mentioned in this letter are not law works, but works produced by saving faith. This is the key that unlocks the book.

The Behavior of Faith

When James wrote this letter, the Church was not faced with the problem of circumcision, or law-keeping as essential to salvation. The uncircumcised were not yet in

the Church. The Christian Jews who formed the early Church were all brought up under the law, having kept all its precepts as far as possible. They realized that their servitude under the law did not yield the results they longed for. When faith in Christ came, they experienced a new kind of life that they could not enjoy under the law. In the background, of course, they had kept the law, but what part, if any, the law played in their salvation did not come up. There was no occasion for it. Consequently, at this time there was no need to define faith, as such, but rather how it will behave itself. And this behavour of faith becomes the theme of this letter.

The Gentiles Saved

When Paul began his active ministry to the Gentiles, things had definitely changed. He was divinely called and fitted to carry the Gospel of the Grace of God to the Gentiles. A dispensation had been committed to him, and by revelation he received and communicated the doctrines relative to grace and the Church. But his teaching and ministry had not yet taken place when James wrote his letter, hence there is no mention made in the Epistle of the Church as the Body of Christ. When Paul launched his world preaching tour, he met with signal success. Wherever he went Gentiles were saved, and Gentile churches established. This made a tremendous impact on the early Church, and this infant Church was as yet ill-prepared to meet this impact.

The Circumcision Party

An entirely new problem now faced the infant Church. What shall be done with these uncircumcised Gentiles

who are now in the Church? What should be their relation to the holy law that God gave to Moses? Can these Gentiles simply ignore this law, and still come under all the covenant promises of God? The leaders, the pillars in the church at Jerusalem, were hesitant. They well understood that justification was not acquired by any deeds of the law, but by faith in Christ. But, who would dare to speak out against the law as relative in some measure to salvation, since all the Jews held such high respect for the law! Many thousands of Jewish believers (Acts 21:20) were zealous for the law, and believed that the Gentiles should be brought under it and keep its precepts to share with them all the privileges which the grace of God bestows. Hesitation on the part of the leaders to take a clear stand on the issue, gave rise to the circumcision party. They felt it their God-given duty to bring this issue to the Gentiles and have them circumcised, and keep the law to enjoy privileges with them of the grace of God.

The Conference at Jerusalem

When these self-appointed law teachers came to Antioch to propagate their teaching, they met with two formidable opponents in the persons of Paul and Barnabas. These two pioneers of the gospel of the grace of God, dared to stand boldly for the grace of God as opposed to law deeds as a means of justification. When much contention followed, the brethren at Antioch decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to have the apostles and elders rule on this matter. The elders of the Church at Jerusalem were, therefore, forced to take a definite stand on the question. The account of the proceedings of this conference is recorded to us in Acts

15 and Galatians 2. Both chapters should be read to get a full account of the proceedings at this conference.

Coming to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas called the apostles and elders together in private consultation and laid before them the gospel they preached to the Gentiles and the signal blessing of God on the preaching of this gospel. Having thus won the confidence of the eldership of the Church at Jerusalem, the whole Church was called into session. The leaders of the circumcision party now loudly proclaimed that the Gentiles must be circumcized and keep the law of Moses. Paul and Barnabas did not for one moment acquiesce to their demands. After much disputing, Peter arose and recounted his experience in being the first to bring the gospel to the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius. The Gentiles who were gathered together in his house believed when they heard the gospel from the lips of Peter, and the Holy Spirit gave them the same tokens of salvation that the Jews received on the day of Pentecost. Now since the Gentiles received the same gift of the Holy Spirit as the Jews did without being circumcized, why, Peter asked, should we now lay a burden upon them which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear?

(To be continued)

The Epistle of James (Part 3) (Aug-Sept 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 7, Aug-Sept 1968.

James then concluded the conference by referring to a prophecy which stated that the Gentiles would come into blessing, and that God would call out of them a people for His name, after which the tabernacle of David, which was then in ruins, would be built again. Therefore, he concluded that they should not trouble the Gentiles who have turned to God, but that a letter be written to them welcoming them into the Church and freeing them from bondage to the Jewish law. To him they all agreed. Forthwith he wrote that historic document recorded for us in Acts 15:23-29. This letter then brought much rejoicing to all the Gentile churches where it was read.

Judaizing Teachers Continue

This action of the conference, however, did not stop those self-appointed law teachers. They continued their work of teaching respect and obedience to the law to the Gentile Christians. They migrated into the regions where Paul and Barnabas had preached and established Gentile churches. Some of these churches, especially those in Galatia, gave ear to these teachers, assuming that perhaps Paul and Barnabas did not have time to declare to them the whole counsel of God, and therefore these teachers came around. When Paul heard of this, he was stirred to the quick; the very foundation of the gospel which he had preached was being undermined. The Holy Spirit, therefore, used Paul to write two monumental books, Romans and Galatians, which

forever separate the principles of law and of grace. These two principles are in direct opposition to each other; they cannot exist together. Grace lays the foundation for a new kind of life, and justification is entirely apart from any works of the law.

Conclusion

When Paul wrote these two books, there was definitely a greater need to define saving faith than to show how it will behave. Paul answers what saving faith is, and James, how it will behave. James is in perfect agreement with Paul as to what saving faith is, and Paul is in agreement with James as to how faith will behave itself.

We conclude by quoting Paul, not James, to show how saving faith behaves. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem to Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works” (Titus 2:11-14).

The Trials Of Life (Aug-Sept 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 7, Aug-Sept 1968.

James 1:1-12

Are you sometimes overwhelmed with trials? Does some pressing burden strike you? Are you overcome with grief at the home-call of a loved one, and your bleeding heart succumbs to the empty loneliness of life? Does adversity compel you to cry out, “Why did this have to happen to me?”

Why The Righteous Suffer

Why do the righteous suffer? This question has been asked from antiquity. Many has tried in every age to answer this annoying question, but the reasoning of the finite mind is but a surface reflection of the infinite. James, the brother of our Lord (Galatians 1:19), who calls himself a servant of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, can speak out with more unreserved candor on this subject than anyone else for he speaks by divine inspiration.

James wrote to the twelve tribes, the believing Jews, who were scattered abroad by the persecution instigated by Saul of Tarsus. This man, Saul of Tarsus, was so embittered against Christianity that he wrought havoc with the church at Jerusalem, scattering abroad, except for the apostles, the Christians who were there. In the course of time some of these scattered Christians came back to Jerusalem for visits and told of the sore trials some of their companions were enduring in the dispersion. James may have had opportunity to hear

those reports with his own ears. His heart bled for his beloved brethren, and his first concern was to write them a letter of encouragement. He reasoned that some of his brethren, since they had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, might wonder why these trying circumstances should come to them. Therefore he proceeds to show them why the righteous suffer.

Testing vs Temptation Immediately after his greetings to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, James launches on his treatise on the trails of life to encourage and strengthen his brethren who were going through them. He says in the second verse, “Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into divers temptations.” The Greek word, translated “temptation” in English, has a double meaning. Primarily it means “to prove by testing,” and then secondarily it means “to solicit to evil.” The context in which the word is used determines which meaning to put on the word, and the context here plainly points to testing rather than temptation, for the meaning of the word. The same principle applies in Genesis 22:1, where it says, “God did tempt Abraham.” The thought is, “God did test Abraham.” God tempts no man, but He does test men.

The word “divers” is now Archaic in the English language, being replaced by the word “diverse.” The word means “various kinds of testings;” testings marked by distinct differences. Satan does not bring the same kind of trial to all these believing Jews because individuals respond differently to trials. What may be a sore trial to one person, may be a light trial to another person. So the testings are marked by distinctions that the trials may be made more effective to the different kinds of persons.

The word “count” has in the original Greek the meaning of “look forward, consider, or regard.” So James asks these scattered Christians to look forward to the trials of life. And how are they to look forward to them? It is with all joy. What a paradox! Look forward with all joy to the trials of life!

All Joy

Now with what kind of joy should these Christians look forward to the trials of life? It is with all joy. The word “all” is quite inadequate to express in English everything that is inherent in the Greek word. The word is a collective pronoun gathering into itself the entirety of the noun with which it agrees. The noun, of course, is joy. So, joy in its entirety, in its most complete form is inferred by the word “all.” In other words, James is saying to these Christians. “Look forward, my brethren, to that complete, all-embracing joy, when you fall into diverse testings.”

Trials Achieve Patience

Why should we look forward with such heartfelt joy to the trials of life? The joy certainly does not lie in the trials themselves, but in that which the trials achieve. James continues, “Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” The idea inherent in the word “knowing” is, “recognizing, discerning, distinguishing.” One of the crying needs of Christians today is to recognize, or to discern the value of things. James had just been talking about trials, pressing burdens, testings, or whatever we may call them. When they do come, we are to discern some inherent value in them. They do not come simply for the sake of coming; there is

infinite value dormant in every trial, and it is our prerogative to recognize that value.

Etymology of Patience

What is this value James asks us to discern? It is patience. It is the purpose of the trials of our faith to produce this priceless Christian heritage. The etymology of the Greek word translated “patience” in the English is extremely interesting. The Greek word is “hupomonee.” It is a compound word composed by prefixing the preposition “hupo” to the verb “menoo.” The preposition “hupo” means “under,” and the verb “menoo” means “to stay, to abide, to remain, to stand fast.” It also carries with it a derived meaning of “remaining alive.” So, putting things together, the word “patience” means “to remain alive under.” But under what are we to remain alive? Well, under pressure, under testings, etc. One who has faith in Christ will not run away from pressure, but will stand fast under it. Pressure comes from the outside world and is always the lot of Christians. But, having faith in Christ, they remain alive permanently no matter how long it continues.

Reaching A Goal

The word “trying” has the value of “proof, test, probation.” So the trials of life are but instruments by which our faith is proven genuine. And the word “worketh” has the value of “to work out, to achieve, to accomplish.” Therefore the word “worketh” simply means to bring about a desired end, to reach a goal. The trials of life are, therefore, designed to accomplish a desired goal, and that goal is patience. With this priceless Christian virtue in view, we can begin to

understand why James admonished these persecuted Christians to look forward with all joy to the diverse testings that are coming upon them.

The Epistle of James (Part 4) (Nov 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 9, Nov 1968.

Earl Miller (continued from last month)

Temptation

James 1:13-16

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren.”

In the above text, James begins his discourse on temptation as a solicitation to evil. Two English words — testing and temptation — are used to translate one Greek word. The primary meaning of this Greek word is that of testing, and the secondary meaning, that of tempting. It is unfortunate that the translators of the King James version preferred the secondary meaning of this word in nearly all cases where this word occurs. In English, at the present time at least, we use the word temptation as it applies to solicitation to evil, and never as a testing of one’s reality. God tests men, but He never tempts them. The context should determine which meaning to put on the word. The context of the first twelve verses of the first chapter of James clearly points to “testing” as the meaning of the Greek word, whereas verses 13 to 16 point to “temptation” as the meaning.

Therefore, in this paper we are considering temptation as a solicitation to evil.

What is Temptation?

Temptation has been defined as, “The incitement of a natural desire to go beyond the bounds that God has set.” This is a good definition; one hardly knows how to improve it. A definition defines when the thing defined is made clear. But if a definition contains words which are not clear, it still does not define. If one does not know what natural desires are, and what the bounds are that God has set, the definition, however good it may be, still does not define temptation.

What are Natural Desires?

Human nature has three basic dessires. In fact, every desire one may have may be classified under either one of these three basic desires. Human nature then, firstly, has a desire to enjoy things; secondly, a desire to get things; and thirdly, a desire to do things. These basic desires are right and good; they are God-given. There are limits within which, if these desires are exercised, will yield the highest good to the individual. These limits are the bounds that God has set. And God was not arbitrary when He set these bounds. He has given the widest possible range for the exercise of these natural desires. One will only bring harm to himself if he crosses those bounds to satisfy his desires. Temptation, then, is simply the incitement of these natural desires to go beyond the bounds to seek satisfaction.

Channels of Approach

Now that we know what temptation is, we ask, “What are the channels through which temptation approaches? The Apostle John had a keen insight into human nature when he wrote, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of this world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (1 John 2:15-17). Here John mentions three channels, which he calls lust, through which temptations come. (Lust is but an unvarnished synonym of desire). Behind these three lust channels lie the three basic desires of human nature. The desire to enjoy things covers everything that has to do with the body — food, drink, sex, etcetera. If this desire is incited to go beyond the bounds, it becomes lust, the lust of the flesh. The desire to get things covers everything outside the body which can be seen and obtained in one way or another — money, houses, lands, etcetera. If this desire is incited to go beyond the bounds, it becomes lust, the lust of the eyes. Then, the desire to do things covers everything which we do to affect the world about us — work, ambition, career, etcetera. And if this desire is incited to go beyond the bounds, it becomes lust, the pride of life. Then when lust has conceived it brings forth sin, and sin when it is finished brings forth death.

Illustrations

To illustrate these basic desires in action, we will take first the desire to enjoy things, and we may take food as

an example. We all enjoy food. There is nothing wrong with the desire, and, if it is lawfully exercised, it will yield health, strength, and enjoyment. But if this desire to enjoy food is incited to go beyond the bounds, and we eat to excess simply because we enjoy food, we will suffer for it — indigestion, etcetera — and it becomes the lust of the flesh. The same is true of everything else that concerns the body whether it be drink, or sex, or whatever it may be. Within the limits these desires may be fully satisfied and they will yield their highest good to the individual, but crossing the bounds entails suffering and may induce slavery to passion or appetite and sink one to the lowest depths of degradation and despair.

Next we take the desire to get things, and we shall use money as the, example. Money is something outside the body that can be obtained. The desire for money is not wrong in itself. It is needed by everyone, and there is no limit as to how much money one can make, if it is made lawfully and used honorably. But if the desire to get money is incited to go beyond the bounds, and one stoops to deceit, embezzlement, or fraud to obtain it, he will suffer for it, and it becomes the lust of the eyes.

Finally, we come to the desire to do things, and we may take one’s ambition in life as an example. That which we do affects the world about us. The desire to do things is right and God-given. But what is the motive behind our doing? Is it for the glory of God, or for the glory of self? G. Campbell Morgan in delivering a message on Temptation, used three words to illustrate the three basic desires: sex, money, and the capital “I.” One’s ego sometimes becomes inflated to the extent that his entire ambition is devoted to making a name for himself. The great Nebuchadnezzar, once in the pride of his heart,

said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30). But the words were scarcely out of his mouth when insanity smote him and he was driven from among men into the fields with the beasts where he ate grass like the oxen, his hair grew like eagles’ feathers, and his nails grew like bird’s claws. When, after seven years, his reason returned again, he blessed the Most High God and gave praise and honor to His name. Man was created for the glory of God, but if his desire to do things is incited to go beyond the bounds so that all he does is for the glory of self, it becomes lust, the pride of life.

The Temptation of Eve

Eve’s temptation is an interesting study in the light of the three basic desires of human nature. Eve was purely a human being. She had an unfallen human nature, and possessed the same basic desires that we possess. Her desire to enjoy things was incited when she beheld the forbidden fruit. The tree was good for food; she had a desire for food, but should she satisfy that desire in a way that was forbidden? Shall she cross the bounds? The did cross the bounds; she ate of the forbidden fruit, and the race has suffered for it ever since.

Then she had a natural desire to get things. The fruit was pleasant to the eyes, and her desire to get the fruit was incited. But should she get the fruit that was forbidden to her? She did get it; she crossed the bounds. She gave way to the lust of the eyes.

Finally, her desire to do things was incited. The incentive that Satan held before her was that by eating of the forbidden fruit, she would become like God (not

like gods) knowing good and evil. If she could do something that would make her like God, she certainly would like to do it. She believed the word of Satan, and she crossed the bounds, but to her dismay, she discovered that beyond the bounds she became very unlike God. She received such an unlikeness to God that it was now utterly impossible of herself to change the unlikeness to likeness. So

Eve’s temptation came to her through the three basic desires of human nature, and she failed on all three points.

(to be continued next issue)

Epistle of James (Part 5) (Dec 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 10, Dec 1968.

Earl Miller (Continued from last month)

The Temptation of Christ

In contrast to Eve's temptation stands the temptation of Christ. Eve was tempted in a garden surrounded with everything that ministered to her comfort and enjoyment. Christ was tempted in a wilderness where nothing ministered to His comfort; He was with the wild beasts. Eve was purely a human being; Christ was the Theanthropic Person, the God-Man. Eve was capable of sinning; Christ was impeccable (not capable of sinning). Eve's temptation proved the weakness of human nature; Christ's temptation proved the impeccability of His hypostatic nature.

The Nature of Christ

A word about the nature of Christ may be in order before we take up the temptation itself. The word "hypostatic" means the union of two distinct and wholly opposite natures — Deity and humanity — into one being. The Person of Christ, therefore, stands out as the greatest miracle of all time. Deity, took on humanity and combined the two together into one personality in such a way that Deity was not lowered, nor was humanity exalted to make the union. The result of this union did not produce a nature which was neither human nor divine, but one which was truly human and truly divine. He was God manifest in the flesh. His acts were not sometimes performed as a human, and other times as a

divine Being, but always, His actions were performed as the true God-Man. There may be mysteries about this hypostatic nature of Christ which defy explanation, but we just accept the scriptural declaration that Jesus was the Son of God.

The Impeccability of Christ

The fact that Jesus was God made Him impeccable. God cannot sin. Christ is God. Therefore, Christ cannot sin. The argument stands like the Rock of Gibralter. If the two premises of the above syllogism are correct, the conclusion must also be correct. Who would question the primary premise — God cannot sin — and who could refute the secondary premise — Christ is God. There are those who question the Deity of Christ, but no one has yet definitely proved that Christ is not God. Hence, if those two premises of the above syllogism are true, the conclusion, Christ cannot sin, is also true.

Why Should Jesus Be Tempted?

The question naturally arises, “What is the point in tempting One who cannot sin?” The answer is really twofold. In the first place, His temptation proved that He was Very God. In the second place, His temptation demonstrated the way to victory over temptation to all mankind.

When God became Man in the Person of Christ, He lived His life in this world as God intended that man should live — to be wholly dependent on Another and not on self. Christ’s whole life was lived in utter dependence upon the Father, not on Himself. He used His omnipotent power to supply the needs of others but never to supply His own needs. The most subtil attacks

of Satan against Him were directed toward the intent to cause Him to step out of that path of dependence. In that path there lies absolute victory. It is written of Christ, “I have set the Lord always before Me … I shall not be moved” (Psa. 16:8). He could not be moved out of that path of dependence on His Father.

The Temptation Itself

Coming back to the temptation itself, we find the scene laid in the wilderness with the wild beasts, after Jesus had fasted for forty days. He was hungry; we may well believe, faint with hunger. Jesus had the same three basic desires that we all have. His desire to enjoy things was the basis of His first temptation. There was nothing that He could enjoy now more than food. Satan rightly prognosticated that this was the most opportune time to bring this temptation to Him. There was no food in the wilderness, and Jesus was in dire need of food. Satan said, “If thou be,” the “if” here is not the “if” of doubt. The word “since” could just as well be substituted for the “if.” “Since You are the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.”

The subtility of this temptation lay in the fact that Satan tried to induce Jesus to act independently of His Father. God had not provided food for His Son in the wilderness. When Elijah was in the wilderness, God commanded the ravens to bring him food, but He did not command the ravens to bring food to His own Son in the wilderness. To turn the stone into bread to satisfy hunger, would be to act independently of God. But he Who always set the Lord before Him, could not be moved. He said to Satan, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God” (Luke 4:4). Jesus quoted this from

the book of Deuteronomy, and that repulsed the temptation.

The second temptation, according to Luke's Gospel, was the incitement of Jesus' desire to get things. Satan had Jesus on a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. As in a fleeting moment, all the kingdoms of the world with their glory and power in His hands, passed before His eyes. Satan said to Him "All this power will I give Thee and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If Thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be Thine" (Luke 4:5-7). Jesus did not question Satan's authority to give the kingdoms of the world to whomsoever he wills, he is the god of this world. In His desire to get things, what would be more desirous to get than the kingdoms of the world? They are to be His anyway in due time. The Father has decreed that He is to be King of kings and Lord of lords, but in His reckoning the Cross must come first. Satan offered Him a short-cut way to the kingdoms of the world. He would by-pass the cross and the suffering. It was but another attempt to get Jesus to act independently of His Father, but He who always set the Lord before Him, could not be moved. He said to Satan "Get thee behind Me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4:8). Again Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy to repulse this temptation.

Finally, the third temptation is directed against Jesus' desire to do things. Jesus was in Jerusalem during the time of a Jewish feast, and He was up on the pinnacle (the highest point) of the temple. A great crowd of people were gathered below. On this occasion, Satan

said to Jesus “If (rather, since) Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over Thee; and in, their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone” (Luke 4:9-11). This was a most subtil temptation. Jesus had repulsed Satan twice before by quoting Scripture, “It is written.” Now Satan used the same approach, “It is written.” Satan quoted a prophecy that would be fulfilled in the Messiah when He came. The Messiah is here. Now if He would just step off the pinnacle of the temple and in angels’ hands come floating down without injury to Himself, that great crowd of people would be convinced that He was the Messiah. But again, He who set the Lord always before Him could not be moved. He said to Satan, “It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Luke 4:12). He met Satan’s quotation of Scripture with another Scripture from the book of Deuteronomy which countermanded Satan’s Scripture and so Satan was repulsed again.

How to Overcome Temptation

The temptation of Christ demonstrated for us in a twofold way victory over all temptations. In the first place, there was the use of the Word of God. Jesus had memorized the Word and three times He quoted from the book of Deuteronomy. The correct word was always at His command when the temptation came. Psalm 119:11 says, “Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee”. The importance of memorizing the Word of God cannot be over-emphasized. Someone said “This Book (the Bible) will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book.”

That statement is only too true. Those who revel in sin, have no use for the Bible, and those who love the Bible have no use for sin. So, hide God's Word in your heart. It will often guide you in the way of victory when temptation strikes.

Then in the second place, Jesus' temptation emphasized the importance of dependence on Another, and not on self. The Christian life is beyond the reach of the natural man. And as for the Christian, it is impossible for him to live the Christian life in his own strength; he must learn to depend on Another, on Christ who is in him.

Christ lived His life on earth as God intended that man should live. His entire life was lived in utter dependence on the Father, and not once did He step out of that path of dependence. In that path there is victory; outside there is failure. The Christian who lives in utter dependence on Christ will never fail while he is depending on Christ. Failure will only come to the extent that he depends on himself. Christ demonstrated the way of victory; let us walk in that way.

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Albert Duter's pictures repersenting Satan as a monster with horns and a tail are not true to the scriptural representations of the adversary. Satan is portrayed as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, but is often tranfomed as an angel of light.

A Scotchman seeing Schaefer's painting of the Temptation of the Lord, said, pointing to Satan, "If that chiel cam' tae me in such as ugly shape, I think he'd hae a tough job wi' me too".

(Matt. 4:11, 2 Corr. 11:14).