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LESSON NOTES

JUST "DO IT!" ✨ A STUDY OF JAMES

Rationale & Background

Digging Deeper D. Thomas Porter

WHY STUDY JAMES

Westerners presume the intellect is the supreme regulator. If the mind is clear, then our behavior will be clear. If the intellect rules, then we rule reality. James, the half-brother of Jesus of Nazareth challenges this premise—he argues: What one does... tells us more about a person than what they think. James was probably from Missouri.

AN OVERVIEW OF JAMES—THE CHALLENGE FOR INTELLECTUAL BELIEVERS

Studies in James requires us to consider how the Lord God tempers our temper, refines our refuse, and ridicules our riches.

James challenges believers to be more than thinkers of the Word; we are to be doers as well. He makes our

lives appropriately more difficult. We are, according to James, to count it all joy when persecuted, ask God without doubting, to accept our own desires¹ as **our** problem (rather than blaming God or Satan). We are to be quick to hear, and slow to speak. We are not to get angry easily; take care of widows and orphans, and to keep ourselves clean from the world's toxicity. Most importantly, we are not permitted only to be Christian thinkers and feelers—we are to be doers. James is not easy.

The music man conned Iowans to buy instruments to accomplish his unique music pedagogy, "think music." When we just *think* music, we don't do music, and more importantly, we delude others and ourselves. We can fool others by our articulated thought and feelings, and we may think we can fool the Lord God Jehovah, but James warns us—don't fool yourselves into thinking that "good thoughts" about God without "good actions" is any more than that—"good thoughts."

You will be intrigued by the forthright nature of James—he's kind of like a Dr. Tom, but less polite. James is more blunt, and authentic; he says, "You're like a guy who looks into a mirror, and when he walks away, forgets what he looks like." We love mirrors, as long as we can walk away from what we see.

A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:

WHY ARE WE TO "COUNT IT ALL JOY" TO FACE TRIALS IN OUR JOURNEY ON THIS EARTH?



¹James uses the Greek word ἡδονών (*hayd-o-nohn*), the source of our English word "hedonism."

CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

Assuming James was written rather early (before 50AD), and possibly the first book in the New Testament, then his epistle also provides a wealth of information about key issues facing the early church. People intellectualized and/or spiritualized their religion. They based their faith on their *own* faithfulness, and/or their faith in their *intellectualized* connection to God. But, actually do something for others? “Oh no—I have faith.” Or, “oh no—I can quote Scripture from here to kingdom come.”

MINDBYTE NO. 1:

WHAT WOULD JAMES EMPHASIZE IF HE WERE WRITING ABOUT TODAY'S CHURCH PROBLEMS?

Although accepted as canonical since the 4th century, James has been nonetheless a controversial epistle. Among the “issues” are:

1. Luther had trouble reconciling its emphasis on “doing” and as a threat to his assertion that salvation and/or sanctification is based on “faith alone.” Even though he argued it was not written by an apostle, but later described James as “a good book, because it sets up no doctrines of men but vigorously promulgates the law of God.”²
2. The authenticity of James was doubted by Theodore of Mopsuestia in the mid-fifth century. Eusebius classes it among the *Antilegomena* or “contested writings” (*Historia ecclesiae*, 3.25; 2.23) because several western churches don’t even mention using it. Gaius Marius Victorinus, in his commentary on the *Epistle to the Galatians*, openly questioned whether the teachings of James were heretical.
3. It was clearly written for Christians with a Judaic heritage, and as a consequence emphasizes following the Law—its fully detailed and straightforward support for Torah-observance is unique within the New Testament.



James the half-brother of Jesus the Christ
Peter Paul Rubens

Assuming the author of James is indeed the half-brother of Jesus, the book of James shows just how great a linkage there is between the so-called “old” and “new” scriptures. Editors of the ESV, for example, assert James is “the Proverbs of the New Testament.” The book also is a great testimony about my Christ’s influence—this is a book written by a man very close to Jesus, but who did not believe his half-brother to be the Christ until much later in life. Yes, James became the *δουλος* (*doulos*, slave or a bonded servant) of Father God and the Lord Jesus the Christ. James became a *δουλος doer*.

James begins by emphasizing and commenting about trials, wisdom, and God’s bounty as a gracious and uniquely good God. The trials preserve us through perseverance. God’s wisdom not only overcomes our shortcomings, it is available just for the asking, and we worship a God who permits only the best for His children. And, on top of all that, Holy Spirit calls on us to practice our religion as if we had a genuine relationship with the Christ.

²Luther's Works (American Edition) 35:395

JAMES CALLS US OUT

James 1:1-8. *Opening Salvos*. This letter is from James, the half-brother of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. He calls himself a slave³ to God and the Christ. He addresses his comments to believers beyond the church at Jerusalem; to wit, the dispersed (diaspora). He says:

When you face trials, all kinds of trials, it is a time for joy (χαρὰν and χάρις same root). Why? When you and your faith are tested by trials, your faith becomes more steadfast. You know this, and steadfastness finishes the work to which we have been assigned. Our goal is maturity and completeness, not lacking in anything.

Now, if you lack wisdom, ask God. He gives generously to all without finding fault. It will be given to you. Remember, however, your doubt can mess up your belief (πίστει). People with such doubt, such judging, are like waves in the sea—blown around by the wind. Your doubt can mess you up in big ways; don't think you will receive a certain thing from the Lord our God. To expect otherwise—you're not only double-minded (δίψυχος only used by James here and in 4:8), you're a child of chaos (ἀκατάστατος, only used by James here and 3:8) in all you do.

- Q Which is the proper translation today for James' attribution—a slave, servant, or bondservant of Christ?
- Q Why is there joy/grace derived from trials? What is the trial for a Muslim who follows Christ? Yours?
- Q What is it that we lack when our faith has not been tempered, tested, indicted?
- Q Why does God give wisdom generously, without finding fault in that person?
- Q If doubt supports a duplicitous, chaotic member of the faith, what are we to do about doubt to ask confidently God for wisdom?
- Q About what do you doubt the most in your faith journey toward mature completion?

JAMES 1:1-8

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

³Undoubtedly the background for the concept of being the Lord's slave or servant is to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures. For the Hebrew believer this concept did not connote drudgery, but honor and privilege. It was used of national Israel at times (Isa 43:10), but was especially associated with famous Hebrew personalities, including such great men as Moses (Josh 14:7), David (Ps 89:3; cf. 2 Sam 7:5, 8) and Elijah (2 Kgs 10:10); all these men were "servants (or slaves) of the Lord."

Though δοῦλος (*doulos*) is normally translated "servant," the word does not bear the connotation of a free individual serving another. BDAG notes that "'servant' for 'slave' is largely confined to Biblical translations and early American times...in normal usage at the present time the two words are carefully distinguished" (BDAG 260 s.v.). One good translation is "bondservant" (sometimes found in the ASV for δοῦλος) in that it often indicates one who sells himself into slavery to another. Since this construct is archaic, few today understand its force. Also, many slaves in the Roman world became slaves through Rome's subjugation of conquered nations, kidnapping, or by being born into slave households. —Reference from the NET Bible.

James 1:9-18. *A Challenge to our Notion of Blessing.*

Believers who are poor should rejoice, take pride in their higher exaltation. It's the rich who should take pride in their lower exaltation. Remember, riches fade like wildflowers. The sun rises, scorches the wild flower—blossoms drop, and so the beauty of the flower. Similarly, the rich will fade away, even while traveling their journey.

So, closer to the Lord God is the person who perseveres under tests because they have stood the test. They will receive the crown (στέφανον) of life (ζωῆς)⁴ promised to those who love Him.

Now, when you're tested, don't be tempted to say "I am tempted by God." The Lord our God is neither tempted by evils (*plural*), nor does He tempt anybody. Reality check: each of us is tempted when by our own evil desires, we are dragged away and enticed (baited).⁵ Then, with our lust conceived, it gives birth to separation from God (sin). Separation from God, when full grown, gives birth to death; i.e., the ultimate separation from God.

So? Don't be fooled, led to wander, my dear ones. Every good, every perfect gift is from God, the Father of heavenly lights (photons) who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through truth. Why? So that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all He created.

- Q Why are the poor exalted? And, why do the rich have lower levels of exaltation?
- Q What is there about perseverance that confirms the crown of life? [Note: Mark 13:13]
- Q Why would someone say "God is tempting me?" [Note: "I'm just that way." DNA = excuse; enculturation = excuse.]
- Q What's the good news of being a kind of firstfruit of the Lord our God? Bad news?
- Q James uses the metaphor of conception matching desire and _____? Who/what is the other actor in this act of conception? [Note: "is dragged away and enticed."] Is it *always* Satan? What/who else drags away and entices?

⁴Most MSS ([C] P 0246 M) read ὁ κύριος (*ho kurios*, "the Lord") here, while others have ὁ θεός (*ho theos*, "God"; 4 33 323 945 1739 *al*). However, several important and early witnesses (P 8 A B Ψ 81 *co*) have no explicit subject. In light of the scribal tendency toward clarification, and the fact that both κύριος and θεός are well represented, there can be no doubt that the original text had no explicit subject. The referent (God) has been specified in the translation for clarity, not because of textual basis. –from the NET Bible

⁵δελεάζω *deleázō* (from *delear*, "bait") – properly, to *bait* a hook or set a trap with bait; (figuratively) *entice* a victim into a moral trap, luring them in through their own *selfish impulses*. –Helps Word Studies, © 2011; Strong's 1185

JAMES 1:9-18

The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position.¹⁰ But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower.¹¹ For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

¹²Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers.¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

James 1:19-2:4 *Truth Mirrors Only If We Remember.* Bro! Sis! Listen up! All of you must be quick to listen, slow to talk, and slow to become angry. Our anger does not facilitate the righteous life that the Lord our God desires, deserves, and demands. So? Get rid of the skybula, the evil which is so prevalent—accept, humbly, the word of truth planted in you. This is the truth which can save you!

So? Don't merely listen to the word and thus fool yourself. DO WHAT THE TRUTH SAYS TO DO! If you don't, or won't for that matter, you're like a knucklehead who looks into a mirror, walks away and then forgets what you look like. Look intently into the truth, the perfect truth, the perfect law which gives freedom! Continue to do, not just walk away forgetting what you've heard. Do, and you will be closer to the Lord our God.

If any of you considers yourself religious yet does not keep a tight rein on your mouth, you fool yourself—your religion is worthless! Reign your rein. Here's what Father God accepts as pure and faultless religion—look after orphans and widows, keep yourself unpolluted from the evil in this world.

As believers in the Lord Christ Jesus—don't show favoritism. When rich [or prominent] dudes and/or dudettes come into your social circles, are you showing them the best seats, the best attention? And when the less than cool folk enter your domain—are they given less, or even worse, ignored?

Listen up! God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith, to inherit the kingdom He promised to those who live Him. But when you insult the poor, you forget the rich who exploit you? Are they not the ones who can afford the expensive lawyers and drag you into court? Are they not the ones who slander the very name of the One to whom you belong? Get real, brothers and sisters!

JAMES 1:19-2:4

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,²⁰ for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

²¹Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.²⁵ But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

²⁶If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. **2**¹My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus [the] Christ, don't show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

- Q Why are we so quick to talk, and slow to listen? Why do we love getting angry?
- Q How does moral filth get in the way of seeing, and remembering, what's truly in James' mirror?
- Q How does doing our faith improve our faith? [1:25]
- Q Why did James use orphans & widows as indicators of a true, an undefiled faultless religion? Avoiding the world's moral pollution?
- Q Why are the poor more blessed than the rich (i.e., closer to the Lord our God)?



OVERVIEW OF JAMES 2

Summaries for this discussion by James are often along the lines of "Treating Everyone Equally." That title is, of course, incorrect; we can not, nor should we, treat everyone *equally* (Romans 13:7 and 1 Peter 2:17). Some are due honor and respect; others are not. *Fairness* toward all is the essence of James' message to combat our human predisposition to prefer some more than others. It is not fair to our Lord, who died for all, to treat His people with capricious regard.

James had noticed how the early church was honoring rich people in ways not commensurate with what his Brother taught. Favoritism is a disease of the human condition—we seem to favor, and sometimes detest, those who have what we want. It was a disease then, and it is a disease now. James, as usual, draws no quarter for he lambasts those of us who would seat the rich in the "best pews." Let us follow his advice—we must "speak and act as those who will be judged by the law of freedom."

CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

James makes it clear he is a slave of God who wants to speak to all those believers dispersed throughout the nations (famine and persecution caused many to leave the Jerusalem hometown). We are to be happy when we face trials because the testing of our faith will cause perseverance and maturity. If we need wisdom to deal with these trials, ask for it—God will provide. But James warns us, we must ask without doubt; otherwise, we are a wave on the sea, we have no substance but are moved by any old wind that comes along.

The humble have self-affirming value: they have a high position; the rich should take pride in their low position. The sun rises with scorching heat—the rich will pass away like a wild flower. We are closest to God (blessed) when persevering during trials—withstanding the test provides a crown of life from God who promised same.

Remember God does not tempt—we tempt ourselves. Our desires entice us to sin and sin, and when full-grown, give birth to death. Therefore, don't be fooled: all perfect gifts come from Father God, the unchanging One. Father God chose to give us a new birth from above so that *we* might be the first fruits of all God created.

As members of the same family, we must be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger. Our anger doesn't facilitate what God desires in us—righteousness by His standards. How do we do this? Get rid of all moral filth (ρυπαριαν, 4507)⁶ and the evil (κακιας, 2549)⁷ that is rampant within you. How do we then get rid of all this filth? Humbly accept the word—it is part of you; it can save you.

⁶Dirty, relatively cheap or shabby; immoral, wicked, vile. This word only occurs in James 1:21, although its root occurs in James 2:2 (referring to filthy clothing) and Revelation 22:11 referring to the filthy (vile) character of people in the last days.

James takes the notion of understanding the word to be more than intellectual acceptance. Understanding requires action—otherwise, we are like people who look in the mirror and forget what we look like. The person who intently searches the word which gives him freedom, obeys the word. He will be closer to God from that obedience.

KEY ISSUES

James 1:27-2:1-7—Favoritism is an abomination for a Christian when, for example, you show deference to the rich or the famous. The poor inherit the kingdom of God; the rich exploit you. If you really follow the royal law of loving your neighbor as yourself, then good; but when you show favoritism, you obviate the law of love. Favoritism convicts you as if you had broken the entire law.

The humble have self-affirming value: they have a high position. The rich have oppressed you, even dragging you into the courts. They have blasphemed the very name of Christ which you bear. Why, then, would you show them honor, and not the poor who God chose to be rich in faith?

- Q Why is favoritism wrong? Hint: How does it affect our “faith in our glorious Lord Jesus [the] Christ?” Why is favoritism so evil? [2:4; 4:11]
- Q Why are we prone to show favoritism? Is a Christian’s showing favoritism more problematic within the church, or outside?
- Q How is it manifested in the church today? What are the “gold rings and fine clothes” at Carrollwood Baptist Church?
- Q How do we push the poor to the side and reify the rich? How should we behave toward the rich?
- Q What can we do, according to James, to avoid this predisposition to show favoritism?
- Q Why is it useful to dishonor the poor? (Porter’s First Law of Human Behavior: People only do what is useful to them, period. See more at <http://TheScoop.DThomasPorter.com/?p=150>)
- Q What is the difference between good interpersonal relationships within the church and politically-driven cliques within the church?
- Q What is the sin behind favoritism? And its consequences? Turning a U3 into a U5?⁸
- Q How can the poor more likely be rich in faith?
- Q Who does the world think are the most worthless, and how can the church reach them?

JAMES 1:27-2:7

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. ²My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus [the] Christ, don't show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

⁷Wickedness, evil, malice as in Acts 8:22, 1 Corinthians 5:8, 1 Peter 2:16.

⁸After interviewing thousands of unchurched Americans, the Rainer research team looked for patterns in the profiles. Based on the results, Rainer suggested five different levels of responsiveness to the gospel. "U1" identifies unchurched Americans who are highly receptive to hearing and believing the good news. They know something about Christianity, and have a positive attitude toward the church. "U2" individuals are receptive to the gospel and willing to hear a message from the church. Those categorized as "U3" are identified as neutral, "with no clear signs of being interested, yet perhaps open to discussion." The "U4" group demonstrates resistance to the gospel but no antagonism. The most unresponsive group in the population is identified as "U5" The most secular Americans are "highly antagonistic and even hostile to the gospel." A. Mohler

See <http://www.albertmohler.com/?cat=Commentary&cdate=2005-08-08>

James 2:8-13—Scripture calls for loving your neighbor as yourself, but favoritism convicts you. It is as if you had not loved at all. So, when encountering people, act and speak as if you were going to be judged by the Law. Remember, when you break one, just one, of God’s commandments, it is as if you were guilty of breaking the entire Law. Your judgment will be more severe if you do not show mercy to others. Mercy trumps judgment!

- Q Why are we condemned if we break just one of God’s commandments?
- Q Which is worse—favoritism, adultery, or murder? (Note John 19:11 before answering). How can then the least of these make us “guilty of all” of the Law?
- Q How will God manifest His judgment given our manifestation of mercy toward others?
- Q What then is the value of this “Law of Freedom?”

JAMES 2:8-13

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,”^[Leviticus 19:18] you are doing right. ⁹But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,”^[Exodus 20:14] also said, “Do not murder.”^[Exodus 20:13] If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. ¹²Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

2:14-26—Faith has no value if it has no behavior emanating from that faith. Simply wishing the poor to be well does not take care of their needs. What good is it to *feel* for those in need without *doing* something about it?

Belief is easy—even the demons and Satan himself believes in God. [Make no mistake about it, there is no stronger believer in the Lord Our God than Satan.] But, it is **your** deeds that demonstrate, that exercise, that build your faith. Do you really need evidence that faith without deeds is useless (dead)? Abraham was *considered* righteous for what he did when offering Isaac as a sacrifice. Faith and actions worked together for Abraham; his faith was made complete by what he *did*. We are rendered as justified⁹ by what we do, not by faith alone.

Rahab the harlot was rendered as justified by what she did for God’s spies and mis-truthing¹⁰ to glorify God. The parallel is clear—just as our bodies are dead without our spirit, faith is dead without deeds.

Q Why is our faith soteriologically impotent without deeds? Consider the nature of faith and its relationship to repentance? Is there faith without repentance? Given the nature of repentance, why do we have trouble accepting faith without deeds is not faith? Or, given the nature of faith, why do we have trouble accepting faith without deeds is not faith?

JAMES 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless [or *dead*]? ²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,”^[Genesis 15:6] and he was called God’s friend. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

²⁵In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

⁹δικαιόω (dikaiuhoh) means shown to be or declared/decreed righteous. The idea is to be acquitted of guilt, not declared “not guilty,” but *considered* “not guilty” (similar to *nolo contendere*)

¹⁰Rahab did not “lie;” she “mis-truthed.” The difference? When we lie to protect ourselves from shame or consequences, we are not glorifying God; ergo, we sin. When we “lie” to protect God and His honor, we glorify Him. Consider Shiprah and Puah who lied to the king of Egypt (Exodus 1:15ff), or Jesus the Christ who said that only [Father] God is perfect/good (Luke 18:18-19; Mark 10:18ff; Matthew 19:16-17) to make sure that *God* was glorified before giving a soteriological lesson on obedience.

- Q When flying in a 747 jumbo jet, which wing is more important? The wing that understands the law, or the wing that obeys the law?¹¹
- Q Why do you suppose Holy Spirit directed James to use Abraham and Rahab as examples of the relationship between faith and deeds?
- Q Did Rahab's deeds overcome her sin as a prostitute? Is Rahab in heaven? And did Abraham's deeds overcome his sins of lying about Sarah and lying with Hagar? Is Abraham in heaven? Careful: what does James say?
- Q What is the difference between being "credited as righteous" and "being righteous?"
- Q Why did James need to write this treatise on Godly living?



BONA NOTAE

Remember all sentient beings have faith in something or someone. The faith that *saves* us from our depravity, however, is that faith in *His* faithfulness, not our faithfulness. Our faithfulness is as rags. Similarly, the deeds that evince our faith do not save us—our deeds are also rags. But deeds that glorify *Him*? Now that is a different story; they clothe us in righteousness; they prevent the bride from being naked (Revelation 19:7-8). They reify our faith. They buoyantly lift up our faith, not in ourselves, but in *His* faithfulness. Want personal affirmation of this relationship? Try obeying God to test His faithfulness; His response to your deeds, provided they are designed to glorify *Him*, will absolutely astound you.

¹¹And, by the way, who should be handling the controls, especially the rudder? You or the pilot? And, if you've decided to fly this 747 we call life from the cockpit, who is your co-pilot? If God is your co-pilot, get out of the left seat. Give Him the controls.