

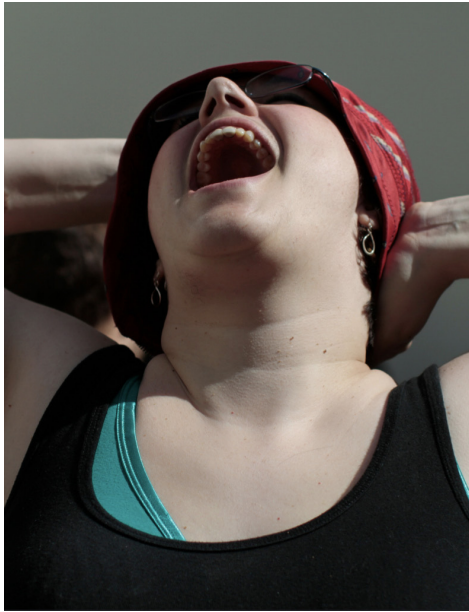


# ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 7, Issue 33

## Why Christians love the book of James.



### JAMESOPHILIA

Notice that new Christians are very quickly indoctrinated into the book of James. I have noticed this trend since 1982. I remember a Christian nurse I worked with back at Aultman Hospital in Canton, Ohio, during that year, who was “on fire for Jesus,” so much so that she had that classic glaze on her face, along with a perpetual, strange little smile. The smile would get even stranger as she talked to me about the book of James. She was in love with the book of James. Just speaking about it would give her what I have come to call “Jamesgasms,” that is, a series of pronounced gesticulations (usually of the hands) and of shocking verbal ejaculations that would always include

bragging upon the book of James as the most spiritual of all letters. She would see me carrying my big old NASB around and she would say, “Martin, you need to read the book of James.” I would answer, “I *have* read the book of James.” She would counter with, “No, you don’t understand. I mean, you need to *follow* the book of James. You need to *do* the book of James.” Then she would gaze into to heaven as though beholding Christ Himself (this is part of a classic Jamesgasm, and it usually includes a discernible disconnect from reality) and say, “The greatest book in the Bible is the book of James.”

She knew that I’d been raised Catholic and she wanted to know my middle name. Catholics, as you know, impose biblical, “baptismal” names upon their newly Catholicized children. I told her that my middle name was “Harold.” “Oh,” she said. “That’s too bad.” I didn’t have the heart to tell her that my middle name was actually “James.”

### THE SEVEN REASONS

Thirty-six years later, having exhaustively studied Scripture, having studied the book of James minutely (though not to the point of Jamesgasm), having studied the letters of Paul minutely and discerned the distinct message of Paul to the nations and the strictly Jewish message that the earthbound Jesus gave to Peter and to James, and having noted more than ever before the earthbound, Jewish bent of modern Christians and their lust for the terrestrial, Jewish Messiah rather than for the non-Jewish, glorified Christ, I have at last figured out why Christians love James so much and do tremble with excitement at his very name: The reasons are seven, and they are as follows—

1) James is writing to Israelites, 2) James is law-based rather than grace-based, 3) James insists upon forgiveness rather than justification, 4) James teaches *against* faith alone, insisting upon works, 5) James knows only the terrestrial Jesus, 6) throughout the book, James adopts

the relative rather than the absolute perspective, and 7) the book of James is on the lowest plane, spiritually, than any book in the New Testament, and probably in the whole of Scripture.

### 1. WRITING TO ISRAELITES

The name of this book is not, “James.” The inspired name of the book is “James to the Twelve Tribes.” Here’s how he starts it: “James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion.”

We know that Christians love all things Israel. They love the pomp and the ceremony of the Jewish ritual. The bottom-line reason for this is that religious people (including Christians) walk by perception and not by faith. This is the easier route. Catholicism is basically a bunch of wanna-be Jews playing dress up. Christians as a whole embrace pageantry, outward beauty, organization (and organs), and discernible manifestations of their so-called god. Again, this is much easier than seeing nothing—that is, than having faith.

Most Christians wish that they were Jews. This is because they prioritize the physical. They require five-sense verification. How is this for five-sense verification:



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Christians admire all things Israel because they think that Jews are closer to God than anyone could possibly be; *physically* closer, that is. (Keep in mind throughout that the book of James concerns physicality in all aspects, including the genetic aspect.) Christians would love nothing more than to have a Jewish temple. The only thing stopping them now from going to a Jewish temple is that the Jews don’t believe in Jesus. They can’t understand how the Jews don’t even believe in their own Messiah. Strangely enough, this doesn’t bother them enough to make them stop wanting to be Jews.

So naturally, when James announces at the beginning of the book that he is writing to “the Twelve Tribes,” Christians experience their first quiver of excitement which will lead to the first in a series of Jamesgasms. They can almost smell the incense of the holy place. They can almost smell the donkey

**“They wish they could have given Elijah a cracker before the raven got to him.”**

that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on. They can almost taste the Passover bread that Jesus broke with His disciples. They wish that they could have been with Moses in the wilderness and with Joshua at the battle of Jericho. They wish they could have given Elijah a cracker before the raven got to him. If only they could have been baptized by John at the Jordan River. If only they’d been trapped at Masada.

They don’t even care if they are second-class citizens to Israel in the earthly kingdom—for surely this is what they would be as proselytes of Judaism. Wherever the Jews are, that’s where they want to be. Wherever Jesus is—the Jesus Who is still wearing His Jew suit, that is—that’s where they want to be. It doesn’t matter to them if they will be assisting the righteous Jews of the Millennium in tossing the bodies of criminals into Gehenna, or opening up bottles of wine for Jesus and His resurrected apostles at their first kingdom feast, this is where they want to be, and this is what they want to be doing. No task is too menial if they are serving Jews. If they are but dogs waiting for scraps from the Master’s table—this suits them. They will sit obediently under the table, bark and whimper and wait for Peter to need his drink refreshed or, better yet, for James to require a foot-washing. They still say that they want to go to heaven, but oddly enough they think that the earth-bound Millennium is heaven. Their concept of heaven is earth—strangely enough.

Most Christians want to visit the Holy Land. Why? They love the earth. Why? Because it's physical. Remember, Christians lust for physicality. They are about sight, not faith. The Holy Land is where the Jews lived and worked and murdered their own Messiah. It is also where Jesus walked, true, and the Christians want to retrace the steps of Jesus—right up until the crucifixion. They don't want any part of the crucifixion. Well, I take that back. They do want to stand at the spot where they think the actual cross stood. However, that is as far as it goes. They are not the least bit interested in what the cross accomplished. In fact, they will fight that tooth and nail (*nail*; get it!). Give them the GPS location of Calvary—yes. Show them the first eight chapters of Romans—no, thanks.

But I will speak more on this later.

## 2 LAW-BASED RATHER THAN GRACE-BASED

Right up there with worshipping Israel, Christians worship the Ten Commandments. I'm not talking about the movie right now, but about the actual Ten Commandments that came down from Mt. Sinai. They love reproducing the law onto what they think the tablets of stone looked like,



and then hanging the tablets in their churches. (A lot of the reproduced tablets have pre-made cracks in them, because they like the idea of Moses throwing down the tablets in disgust at the idolatrous Israelites dancing around the golden calf.) They stare at the law longingly. It is their hearts' desire to do it. All they want to do is obey God's commandments. They still think that obeying law is the way to righteousness.

Christians haven't received any of the latest memos concerning grace because they can't take their eyes from *James*

*to the Twelve Tribes*; in fact, James himself had not received the latest memo from Paul—justification apart from law—when he wrote his letter, and there is good reason for this. The memo was not addressed to James. It did not concern him. Even in the kingdom, James will not be operating according to the justification-apart-from-law memo (the revelation) of Paul. Paul's revelation wrecks the Israelite plan, and the Israelite plan must proceed to a consummation, and so all Circumcisionists *must* ignore Paul, and they do. Including James.

While Paul was alive, James barely gave Paul the time of day. Paul wasn't James' business. The only reason James even nodded at Paul and accepted him as a believer (of sorts) was because of the influence of Peter. God gave Peter a revelation that the nations were clean, and thus Peter recognized Paul's distinct message and, although he did not adopt it as his personal belief, he acknowledged its legitimacy—that is, it being from Christ—and he convinced the other Circumcisionists such as James to at least let Paul into their assembly, to at least hear him out, to at least let Paul explain himself and his revelation to them, and to at least not kill him.

Christians are tactile, and thus stone attracts them. Stone is graspable. Physical. One can run one's hand over a stone and finger the cracks in it. It is cold and hard. It's better than grace (to them) because grace can't be handled and most Jews (and by extension, Christians) simply do not trust that which cannot be handled. I don't think they believe that any invisible blessing such as grace can actually exist. They give the existence of such invisible blessings lip service, but their hearts are far from it. They need evidence, and more evidence. And so does James, as we shall see. In fact, James' *thing* is physical evidence. So naturally those who follow James will expect and revel in physical evidence of salvation for themselves and for anyone they hope to bring under the influence of James.

Here is what James had to say about the law of Moses in James 2:8-11—

Howbeit, if you are discharging the royal law, according to the scripture, "You shall be loving your associate as yourself," you are doing ideally. Yet if you are showing partiality, you are working sin, being exposed by the law as transgressors. For anyone who should be keeping the whole law, yet should be tripping in one thing, has become liable for all. For He Who is saying, You should not be committing adultery, said, You should not be murdering, also. Now if you are not committing adultery, yet are murdering, you have become a transgressor of law.

### 3. JAMES INSISTS UPON FORGIVENESS RATHER THAN JUSTIFICATION

The reason that James insists upon forgiveness rather than justification is that he has no idea what justification is, which is clearly evidenced from his above quote concerning doing the law (in every point) and not transgressing it. Justification is not his truth; it's not his reality. Why? Because justification is a blessing dependent upon the lack of law. Witness Paul in Romans 3:27-28—

Where, then, is boasting? It is debarred! Through what law? Of works? No! But through faith's law. For we are reckoning a man to be justified by faith apart from works of law.

With law, you're either doing it or not doing it. There's no other option. The problem, of course, is the no one can do it—Romans 3:10;8:3. Yes sir, that's a real drawback of the law. Forgiveness exists *because* of law and has no meaning apart from it; without law there can be no transgression of law, and therefore no forgiveness. Forgiveness means “to loose.” Forgiveness says, “You transgressed law, but we will loose you from the penalty.” Justification, on the other hand, declares a person to be righteous. The justified person is considered not even to have sinned. Forgiveness becomes impossible to one who is not even guilty. This blessing comes via faith. Faith is not about law, and law is not about faith. No faith is required to obey laws. Law is about doing, while faith is about believing.

Romans 3:21-22—

Yet now, apart from law, a righteousness of God is manifest (being attested by the law and the prophets), yet a righteousness of God through Jesus Christ's faith, for all, and on all who are believing.

The law and the prophets attested to the righteousness of God, but never did they suggest that such righteousness would come apart from law, let alone through the faith of another man, namely Jesus Christ. James 5:16 proves to us that James never approaches justification from sin, but rather promotes the confession of sins to other human beings, and that only by confessing and praying for one another, to God, will such sin be loosed for a season, that is, until the next sins are committed, requiring another cycle of confession and praying. Here is the passage—

Then confess sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The operative peti-

tion of the just is availing much. —James 5:16

How different this is from Paul's exhortation to consider one's old humanity to have been crucified with Christ. Here is Paul in Romans 6:6—

Knowing this, that our old humanity was crucified together with Him, that the body of Sin may be nullified, for us by no means to be still slaving for Sin,

With Paul's revelation, the body of Sin is nullified, not by confessing it or asking other people to pray to God concerning it, but by acknowledging Sin's inability to condemn. This is quite the opposite of James, who continually sees sin as an enemy to be wrestled against and conquered via confession and prayer. This is the essence of forgiveness: pray that God would loose you from the penalties of your sins. To be justified, however (to belabor the point), is to be declared righteous by God, in spite of sin. James is still slaving for sin in that he is confessing it and praying about it. To James, the old humanity is alive and kicking. To Paul, the old humanity has been crucified. Thus, Sin no longer blocks a person from God's presence. So why pray desperately concerning it? Why waste time and energy confessing it? Here is justification in a nutshell: *Sin is no longer a problem; don't worry about it.*

“To James, the old humanity is alive and kicking.”



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James doesn't grasp this, and isn't meant to. Justification by faith is much higher than the revelation given to him. This is because James still operates under the specter and challenge of law and its penalties. This is why it was easier for a Greek to embrace justification by faith than it was for a Jew. The Jews had too much baggage. The Jews, raised in law, simply could not imagine operating apart from it. Thus, the only alternative left for the Jew is forgiveness. This is completely consistent with James, but antagonistic to Paul. A.E. Knoch writes—



James looks at faith entirely from the human side, Paul from the divine. What a man says he has, if he has it not, cannot, of course, save him. But James is not speaking of a pretended faith. He insists that faith apart from works is dead. He boldly says, "That faith cannot save him." Yet Paul is

affirming that righteousness is through faith, that it may accord with grace (Ro.4:16). And he insists that if it is grace, it is no longer out of works, else grace comes to be no longer grace (Ro.11:6). The salvation to which James refers does not include justification, hence there is not the necessity for grace. Paul speaks of grace continually, and refers to it over a hundred times in his epistles. James only mentions it twice in one passage (4:6). James is dealing with a nation in covenant relationship with God, and an administration in which faith and works are mingled, whereas Paul is connected with the dispensation of unadulterated grace to those who have no claim on God whatever.

Briefly, the differences between Paul and James are not to be explained away. They are irreconcilable contradictions if we take them to refer to the same divine administration and the same people. Left to their own time and place, there is no reason why they should agree. God is continually changing His methods, to conform to the various objects He has in view,

#### 4. JAMES TEACHES *AGAINST* FAITH ALONE, INSISTING UPON WORKS

Throughout *James to the Twelve Tribes*, James flogs the flesh, trying to motivate it. Why? Because to James, faith without works is dead. If you don't have works, you don't have anything. Faith isn't enough. In no uncertain terms, James insists that faith alone cannot save a person. I'll let the man speak for himself—

▶ "Faith, if it should not have works: it is dead by itself." —*James 2:17*

▶ "Faith apart from works is dead." —*James 2:20*

▶ "You see that by works a man is being justified, and not by faith only." —*James 2:24*

▶ "For even as the body apart from spirit is dead, thus also faith apart from works is dead." —*James 2:26*

In case you forgot, here is Paul in Romans 3:28—

For we are reckoning a man to be justified by faith apart from works of law.

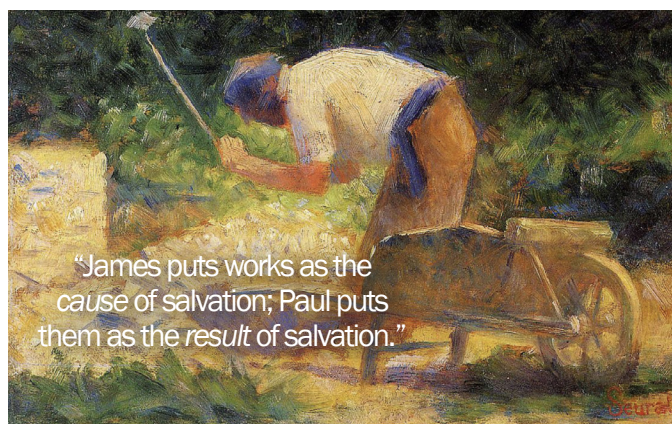
And Romans 4:5 (the italics are mine)—

Yet to him who is *not* working, yet is believing on Him Who is justifying the irreverent, his faith is reckoned for righteousness.

James is all about working. His book is full of warnings to hypocritical people who *say* that they love and care for others, but who deny it by withholding good works from the very people they claim to love. Who isn't against such hypocrisy? Who *doesn't* want to see faith take action? Doesn't Paul want the same thing? He does. But in the works department, here is the big difference between James and Paul—

James puts works as the *cause* of salvation; Paul puts them as the *result* of salvation.

Take Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul spends eleven chapters telling us what Jesus Christ has done for us, and that we're saved by grace and by the faith of Christ apart from works of law. He doesn't tell anyone to do anything, really, except to apprehend the truths that he's unveiling. Only after unveiling multiple glorious truths of what Christ did at Calvary for humanity (while



humanity languished in a reclining position of sin and death) does Paul, in chapter 12, exhort the believers to good works. But he makes the good works a result of the previous truths concerning salvation, and not a cause of them. Here's how Paul starts chapter twelve—

I am entreating you, *then*, brethren, by the pities of God, to present your bodies a sacrifice, living, holy, well pleasing to God, your logical divine service.

The key word here is “then.” The “then” refers back to everything Paul said in chapters one through eleven. In other words, “Because of what I just told you—that your salvation is of faith and not of law or of any works whatsoever—you may as well act decently.” This is far different than James', *obey or else*.

Out of the gate, James doesn't tell anyone anything about any blessings or gifts that they have from Christ. It's probably because the Jews don't have many. Here's how James leaves the gate—

- be happy with your trials
- request wisdom
- don't be double-souled
- don't rely on riches
- endure more trial
- don't blame God for your trials
- stop being deceived
- don't speak too fast
- don't anger too quickly
- get rid of all your filthiness
- do what the word tells you
- don't forget what you hear
- watch your tongue
- visit the bereaved and widows
- keep yourself unspotted from the world

And that's just chapter one. The guy is just getting warmed up. How opposite of Romans, where Paul spends the first half of the letter telling the Romans what Christ did for them, in spite of them.

Honestly, the rest of *James to the Twelve Tribes* is too depressing to even list every one of the commands and prohibitions leaking out of the man's pen. But then again, what would you expect from a guy who knows Jesus only according to flesh and thus has known only the Lamb of God and not the crucified Answer to Adam? Besides, the man is writing to total reprobates. This book is nothing but a list of dos and don'ts to a bunch of quarreling chil-

dren. I'm not saying that it's not inspired. It is. This is an inspired guy talking to reprobates and spoiled children about behaving themselves. James in a nutshell is: *Do or die, morons*.

There is not a word in *James to the Twelve Tribes* about what God has done for humanity; nothing. Nothing here goes from God toward helpless humans, as it does with Paul. Everything here is directed to sinning sots, telling them how to behave themselves in order to please God. *Shape up or ship out* is the message of James. As such, *James to the Twelve Tribes* is entirely consistent with the Law of Moses. This book is as flesh-oriented as any book of the Bible can get—in my



opinion—and still be inspired. No wonder Christians like it. To put it on par with Paul's letters or, worse, to supplant Paul's letters with it, is the direst mistake. A.E. Knoch writes in his *Concordant Commentary on the New Testament*—

None of the Circumcision epistles so clearly indicates the class to whom it is written as the letter of James to the twelve tribes in the dispersion. Its conflict with Paul's epistles is so pronounced that Luther rejected its authority, and endless attempts have been made to find a means of reconciliation, without coming to any satisfactory solu-

tion. Once it is apprehended that this epistle is for a different people and a distinct administration, all need of reconciliation vanishes and we are not tempted to tone down Paul or drag up James to a common level.

The contrast between the ministry of James and that of Paul is graphically illustrated in their lives: Paul was born at a distance from the land of Israel, and had no relations with the Lord until after His ascension into heaven. James, on the contrary, was born of the same mother as the Lord, and lived in the land all his life. In Paul the spiritual comes to the fore, in James, the physical.

The very name of James is suggestive. It is practically the same as Jacob, or Supplanter, who, in his career, exemplified the energy of the flesh, and whose name was changed to Israel when the flesh was subdued. The name was also applied to the nation when their crooked ways called for it rather than for the name Israel. Hence it may be taken to indicate the spiritual state of those to whom this epistle is addressed.

There's another great "James-in-a-nutshell" description: *the energy of the flesh.*

## 5. JAMES KNOWS ONLY THE TERRESTRIAL JESUS

As A.E. Knoch notes above, James was a literal brother of Jesus Christ; he grew up with Him. He came out of the same womb. They both sent Mary Mother's Day cards. They played on the same baseball league together. When Mary said, "Supper's on!" James and Jesus came running to the same dining room table. Jesus was older than him, so James probably talked to his brother about all the classic life issues, such as girlfriends—

JAMES: That girl a few houses down from us on Fish Street is really cute.

JESUS: You must be talking about Abigail.

JAMES: You've noticed her?

JESUS: It's hard not to.

JAMES: I'm thinking of asking her to the dance this Friday at the Quail Club.

JESUS: I only see one problem.

JAMES: What's that, brother?

JESUS: You're six years old, and she's eighteen.

JAMES: Am I being filthy?

JESUS: Well, I—

JAMES: Double-souled?

JESUS: It's just that—

JAMES: Am I already too spotted by the world?

JESUS: I just think that you ought to—

JAMES: Watch my tongue? Visit the bereaved and the widows?

JESUS: Yes. And how about find someone your own age? *I'm* going to the dance with Abigail.

JAMES: Sorry about that, brother. I see what you're saying, brother. I didn't mean to cramp your style. Golly, you're the best brother a guy could ever have. *I'm* not going to mess up your life.

JESUS: You're young yet. Be happy with your trials.

MARY: Boys! Supper's on!

JAMES AND JESUS: Coming, mother!



When Jesus was on Earth, Paul called Him "a minister of the Circumcision, to confirm the patriarchal promises" (Romans 15:8). It is far easier to relate to the terrestrial Christ than the glorified Son of God. Relating to Jesus on Earth would have been as easy as relating to either Abraham or Moses. He was just as much human in appearance and approachability as these patriarchs. James related to him as Messiah as easily as he did while brushing his teeth next to Him as a boy. As I told you, Christians like things that they can literally handle, literally talk to, literally pat on the head. No one could relate more to humanity than the son of God in the form of humanity, and of a dumpy humanity at that.

However, please now consider what Paul said concerning this same Jesus Christ (the brother of James in the flesh, but no longer that to Paul) in 2 Corinthians 5:16—

So that we, from now on, are acquainted with no one according to flesh. Yet even if we have known Christ according to flesh, nevertheless now we know Him so no longer.

Paul is pushing the saints of the body of Christ to maturity. Part of this maturity is to no longer consider anything according to flesh—including Jesus. James knew Jesus in His Jew suit and shared a bunk with Him—and that’s as far as it ever went with James. Paul, on the other hand, first laid eyes on Jesus Christ as the glorified Son of God. This manifestation of His person was as far from an Israelite as the sun is from a lump of coal. It was much easier for Greeks to grasp a glorified Christ than for Jews; the Greeks had far less baggage and no experience with the terrestrial Jesus. For James and his modern-day Christian fans, however, relating to Jesus Christ in this new way is practically impossible.

## 6. JAMES ADOPTS THE RELATIVE RATHER THAN THE ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE

In chapter 1 verses 13 and 14, James writes—

Let no one, undergoing trial, be saying that “From God am I undergoing trial,” for God is not tried by evils, yet He is trying no one. Now each one is undergoing trial when he is drawn away and lured by his own desire.

This is relative rather than absolute truth, because we know that, absolutely speaking, all trials come from God. Even a man’s own desire, by which he is lured, comes from God. In fact, “all is of God” (2 Corinthians 5:18). Nothing is *not* from God. James’ statement is the equivalent of saying, “Eve got all of us into this mess. God didn’t tempt Eve. Eve got drawn away by her own desire, and then Adam was forced to join her. God was nowhere in the vicinity.”

Relatively speaking, all of this is true. But it is such a low viewpoint so as to mock God’s bigger plan. It is



“Such a low viewpoint.”

so primitive of a perspective so as to relegate God to the shadows of His own creation. James is so intent on convicting and reforming his lowbrow, flesh-bent, sin-sotted audience that he refuses to even acknowledge God’s ultimate control of it all—assuming that he even knows it.

Paul has no such qualms. Paul advises believers not to sin, of course, but at the same time unveils the source of all sin: mortality—“For death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned” (Romans 5:12). The source of mortality? Adam—“Through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death” (Romans 5:12). The cause of Adam’s failure? God. Romans 8:20—

For to vanity was the creation subjected, not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it, in expectation...

God had a purpose behind Adam’s failure, thus making it a relative failure and not an absolute one. The sin and death would lead to an expectation, and the expectation would be answered by Christ.

My nickname for Paul has always been, “Mr. Absolute.” *Let no one say that from God he or she is undergoing trials?* Paul blows that up with Romans 11:32, “God locks up all together in stubbornness.” Isn’t stubbornness a trial of the worst sort? Paul destroys James’ relative perspective with, “God gives to all life and breath and all” (Acts 17:25). What is not included in the “all”?

*Each one is undergoing trial when he is drawn away and lured by his own desire?* This is relatively true, but where does the human desire come from in the first place? The desire is a product of death, which itself is a product of the sin of Adam, for which God is ultimately responsible.

Even James’ own prophets attributed evil to God. Amos wrote in 3:6—“Would there come to be evil in a city and Yahweh not have done it?” Or let’s just get to the point and quote Isaiah in 45:7—

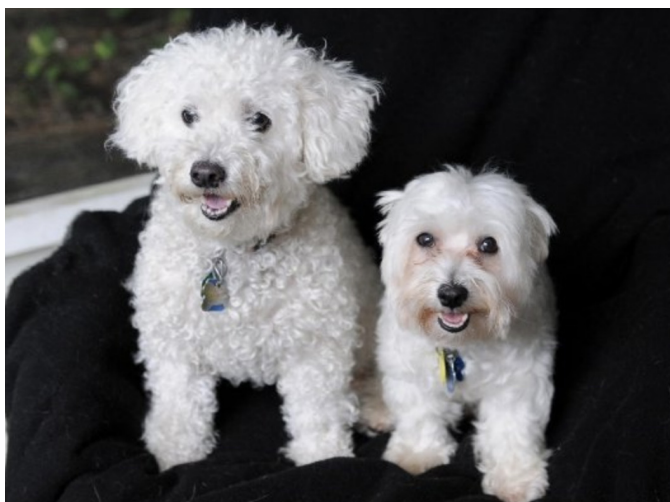
I am Yahweh and there is no other; Former of light and Creator of darkness, Maker of good and Creator of evil, I, Yahweh, make all these things.

But James is not interested in these truths. They don’t suit his purposes. Again, he is writing to lowlifes with barely a spiritual pulse. He’s giving them the defibrillator of Moses. Every pulse of the paddle is James saying, “Let’s go!” “Stop sinning!” “Save yourself!” “No excuses!” “Impress God!” “No hypocrisy!”

Christians love this viewpoint because it is immediate and simple. It is fleshly, limited, low, easily-accessible. This cross-wearing contingent seem only to be able to manage



what is within reach of their ten digits. They don't want to be confused with absolute truth. It's too high for them. They don't know what to do with it. They don't know what to do with Paul's statements that "God locks up all together in stubbornness," and "To vanity was the creation subjected, not voluntarily," and they certainly refuse to entertain God's own confession that He created evil. It doesn't fit a world-view that revolves around themselves. Showing any sort of absolute-truth verse to a Christian is like showing trigonometry to a poodle.



“Showing any sort of absolute-truth verse to a Christian is like showing trigonometry to a poodle.”

The relative perspective makes humanity feel big—bigger than it actually is. Flesh-oriented people like little ponds because it makes them feel like big fish. The absolute perspective is anything but a little pond. It shrinks humanity to its proper place as creatures of a Creator Whose absolute control shows human control to be nil. Mature believers don't mind realizing how small they are. In fact, they relish it. Seeing only to the end of one's nose, however, is much easier on the ego than contemplating the stars.

7. THE BOOK OF JAMES IS ON THE LOWEST PLANE, SPIRITUALLY, THAN ANY BOOK IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, AND PROBABLY IN THE WHOLE OF SCRIPTURE.

Finally, in James 4:4, we find out who James has been writing to all along—

Adulterers and adulteresses! Are you not aware that the friendship of this world is enmity with God? Whosoever, then should intend to be a friend of the world is constituted an enemy of God.

So there it is. Adulterers and adulteresses. No wonder Christians relate so well to James. Not only is James writing to a flesh-based people (Israel), he is writing to adulterers and adulteresses among that flesh-based people. This epistle, then, is aimed at the lowest of the low. That Christianity identifies with James above all other books shines an unintended light on the deplorable moral condition of Christians. For where else can you find a more condemning, sin-wracked, self-righteous sector of humanity who cannot imagine itself surviving or being saved apart from the obeying of impossible commandments? As A.E. Knoch writes—

It seems almost incredible to find such a low moral standard in this epistle, especially as works are demanded for salvation. The untamable tongue, cursing, jealousy, strife, battles and fighting are all spoken of as common amongst the twelve tribes. They are charged as being friends of the world, sinners, impure of heart and double souled. What a contrast is this with such epistles as Philippians and Thessalonians, even though these are written to those who, but a short time before, were steeped in heathenism and idolatry! The pure grace of God, unaided by legal precepts or other inducements, is far more potent in producing conduct which is pleasing to God than all the efforts prompted by the desire for salvation or controlled by the terrors of the law.

And there, my friends, is the secret to the success of Paul's gospel in producing fruit truly worthy of repentance: grace, not law, has power to change people. The condemnation of law only produces more sin (Romans 5:20). But the favor of God's grace brings a heartfelt love from the human heart toward the source of its blessing.

Grace is the source of our blessing, and we're not about to trade it for James. —MZ

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