

## LESSON 3

# PROBLEMS JAMES WRITES ABOUT

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### REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What is the Church? (L. 1)
2. If the world hates us, how can we still be happy in it? (L. 1)
3. Is it easier to live in the New Testament time than it was in the Old Testament time? (L. 2)
4. How do we know the devil fights so hard today? (L. 2)

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### MEMORY QUESTIONS:

8. What does James say about religion?  
**James says in chapter 1:27 that “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”**
9. Mention two of the evils which the devil brought into the churches?  
**The devil deceived the people to think that since they were saved, they could live as they pleased; they also used the world's standards of greatness.**
10. What does James say is the remedy?  
**James says in chapter 4:7, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”**
11. What does James say about friendship with the world?  
**James says in chapter 4:4, that “Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”**
12. What is the theme of the book of James?  
**In James 2:26 we read, “Faith without works is dead.”**

**READ CAREFULLY:**

The book of James

**LESSON DISCUSSION:**

We take up the book of James first of all since this book was probably the first epistle written. When you read this epistle you will find that James is taking up some very real problems that faced the churches.

*PERSECUTION*

One of the problems was that the churches were being persecuted. Persecution should not be allowed to be used of the devil to bring doubt in the church. It must rather, in the hand of God, bring patience. "But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:4)

*THE WORLD'S STANDARDS OF GREATNESS*

Another problem that arose was using the world's standards for greatness. This is a problem that arises again and again. It is not absent from the church today. James says, "My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with partiality." (James 2:1)

The members of the church were showing special favor and respect to those who were rich in the things of this world. They should have shown respect to those who were rich in grace and faith. Because of this, the devil had managed to bring trouble and shame into the church. In chapter 2:9, James says, "but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors."

What is the solution to this problem? First of all, look to the law of God. Listen to the Word of God. And then do not only be a hearer of the Word, but also a doer. "Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21) Having looked into the law and Word of God which tells you that you must love your neighbor as yourself, ask yourself also whom God has chosen out of this world. "Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" (James 2:5)

*LIVING AS YOU PLEASE?*

Another real problem that arose was that people talked about being saved by faith, and then lived just as they pleased. It seems clear that there was quite a bit of wickedness in the church because of this.

You can imagine what it was like, because we still have that problem in the church today. The devil comes along and says, "Well if you are saved by faith, without works, then you don't need any works, do you? You don't have to have anything to do with the law of God anymore. You are now saved and nothing can take that away from you."

We are surprised how many people believe the devil when he says something like this. "It is not what I do, but what I believe," people say. And of course it is true that it is not what we do that saves us. It is the finished work of Jesus that saves us. We are justified by faith only.

*JUSTIFICATION EXPLAINED*

When God, the great Judge of all the earth, looks at us who believe, He sees us in Jesus Christ with His righteousness and therefore says, "Not guilty." But the other part that the devil adds to this is not true. We cannot therefore say that we are done with the law of God, or that we can live as we please.

*TRUTH PERVERTED*

You see, boys and girls, how early this came into the Church. Here the devil is like an angel of light who comes to teach us about justification by faith only, without works. But James tells us that the law has become the law of liberty for us. We have been made free from the law as it judged us as sinners, and, now that we are free from the law in that way, and are free from the power of sin, the law tells how we can live before God as real, free children of God.

James uses a little illustration to show this. He says, "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give

them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” (James 2:15-17)

You will see, young people, that the answer to this problem, this deceit that the devil brings in, must also be solved by understanding the Word of God better.

### *EVIL TALKING*

The last problem I will mention in this lesson is a dangerous thing that the devil uses. James is very strong against evil talking.

In the last part of chapter 3 James shows that what comes out of the mouth is what is first of all in the heart. And things come over our tongues so easily. We would not very soon kill a man, but we might quite thoughtlessly and quickly speak all kinds of awful things about him which shows what is in our hearts.

James says, “But no man can tame the tongue. *It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*” (James

3:8) And yet the Christian is expected to have good control of his tongue, for “the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” (James 3:17)

### *AN ANSWER FOR ALL*

One final answer to all these problems: “Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” (James 4:7,8,10)

Young people, you see the devil working in the very same way in the Church today! He uses the same means. He still deceives even within the Church. He still tells people that they can be friends of the world and also of God, that they are really great if they have a lot of riches, that if they only have faith (which is not really faith at all), they do not have to pay any attention to the law anymore. And the answers of God through His servant James are still the answers we must learn and use.

### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

- ◆ 1. The book of James shows us how the devil attacks the church and how God would use us to overcome his attacks.
- ◆ 2. Persecution and trial is designed by God to strengthen our faith.
- ◆ 3. God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith.
- ◆ 4. We must not only be hearers, but doers of the Word.
- ◆ 5. Faith without works is dead.

### **QUESTIONS FROM THE LESSON:**

1. Name the four problems your lesson lists from the book of James.
  
  
2. What does James say is God's purpose in trials and persecutions?

3. What does James mean by having respect of persons?
4. Why is faith without works dead?
5. What is this faith that James is talking about?
6. What is the relationship between faith and works? Can you give an illustration from nature?
7. How must we, as the children of God, use the law?
8. What understanding do we need so we won't be fooled by the devil?
9. What is the most dangerous thing you have and why?
10. What will God do if we humble ourselves before Him?

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**WRITTEN WORK:**

1. What two Old Testament persons did James say were justified by works?
2. Why will doubters not receive wisdom from the Lord? (See chapter 1)
3. Why do the people not receive what they ask for in prayer according to the first part of chapter 4?