

TODAY IN THE WORD

OCTOBER 2004



His faith was made
complete by what
he did.

James 2:22

JAMES: THE WISDOM OF TRUE FAITH

RUNNING THE RACE

Maurice Greene, reigning Olympic champion in the 100-meter dash, trained hard this past year in his quest to join the U.S. Olympic Team. Fans and coaches saw him as a clear favorite to capture the gold, despite his up-and-down seasons in 2002 and 2003.

At the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia, Greene received two Olympic gold medals, for the 100-meter dash and the 4 X 100-meter relay. But after enduring several crippling injuries during the next few years, he was no longer at the top of his game.

Despite injury and a weakened performance, the Olympic runner refused to give up. He kept running, even when winning did not come as easily.

When he was tempted to get discouraged, he learned an important lesson.

Talking to a news reporter, he said that during his down times he realized that he needed to fall in love with the work, not just the winning. He needed to learn to love the training, not just the end result.

"I'm not thinking about breaking the world record," said Greene. "I'm thinking about running the best race I possibly can."

Wow! What a great attitude! What a compelling example!

Our walk with Christ could use a good dose of Greene's perspectives. We are not just called to enjoy the end result of our "race," which is heaven, but to live this life on earth doing the best we can under the Spirit's leadership to serve Christ regardless of any immediate reward. Though fatally injured by the Fall we have been called to this race in spite of our frailties and asked simply to persevere with the resolve to win for His glory!

Like a personal trainer for the race called life, James packed a lot of advice into a few

chapters. As he says, it is not enough to know what God's Word says, but to get in the race and do it. James is not subtle in his advice to us. He speaks to life in the everyday lane and warns us about mere knowledge of the right way to run the race. He warns, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 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" (1:22–25).

Act on what we've been taught! Take the risks that lead to reward! Obey! These are the rally cries of our trainer! In fact he reminds us that, "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead!" (2:17). Full of practical advice for the race with easy-to-understand word pictures and challenging directives, James takes us by the hand into the arena of life on Jesus' terms.

While some see a tension between faith and works as a theological contradiction (I agree that we do not and cannot earn our faith through good works) it remains unavoidably true that a vibrant, living faith will be marked by the clarity of Jesus in us and through us in action.

So let's grant James permission to take us beyond mere knowledge to dynamic action. As Maurice Greene said, let's fall in love with the process—that day-to-day walk of faith that proves the point that our lives belong to the living Christ who as the ultimate trainer ran the race before us!



James Stowell



ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Love

Someone has said that love is a verb. That may be true, but before it was a verb, it was an attribute of God. According to 1 John 4:8, God is love. He is the source of love and love is the distinguishing mark of all that He does (1 John 4:7).

God's love is the divine attribute that helps us to keep many of the other attributes of God in perspective.

God's moral attributes of goodness and holiness, for example, would create an impenetrable barrier for us if it were not for the attribute of love. God's goodness and holiness are reflected in divine justice. God's justice, however, has been tempered by the fact that He is love. Love motivated God to send His Son as a sacrifice for our sin (Eph. 2:4). He is repeatedly described as God of "unfailing" love (Ps. 6:4; 13:5; 21:7). Our experience of God's love motivates us to show love to others.

God's love is not shallow sentimentalism. It is an attribute in harmony with all His other attributes. It is active and shows itself in the way that God deals with those He has created. It is His love that causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall (Matt. 5:43-45).

Why Theology Matters

God's love is the ultimate foundation for the love we show to others. We love others because God has loved us. Only those who have been born of God through faith in Jesus Christ can love in the way that God intended. Like God who has loved us, our love should be sacrificial. We must be willing to lay down our lives on behalf of those for whom Christ died (1 John 4:11).

For Further Reading

To discover more about the way God shows His love, read *The Five Love Languages of God* by Gary Chapman (Moody Publishers).



MBI Today

NEWS OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS AT MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE
OCTOBER 2004



*“To send out
workers into
his harvest field”*

MATTHEW 9:37

By Lisa Ann Cockrel

Did you know that one out of every 16 Protestant missionaries currently serving on the mission field received a portion, if not all, of their training at Moody Bible Institute?

Throughout its history, Moody has equipped at least 30,000 students to serve God around the world. On October 12–15 this year, one hundred of those missionaries will return to the MBI campus to reach out to the next generation of laborers at MBI’s annual student missions conference. The entire student body will attend a series of lectures and workshops conducted by these visiting missionaries.

The theme of this year’s conference is “Serving Christ Among Muslims” and the keynote speakers will be Moody alumnus Dr. Bob Sayer, U.S. Director of Arab World Ministries, and Dr. Imad Shehadeh, founder and president of the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary in Amman, Jordan.

“We have intentionally chosen this year’s theme, because it is such an appropriate focus in the light of world events,” said Steve Clark, professor and former interim chair of the Department of World Missions and Evangelism at Moody. “We’ll be talking

not only about serving in Muslim nations and among Muslim communities worldwide, but also in our own neighborhoods, so there will be something for everyone. I think it will be a great help to our students, not only in terms of providing much-needed information but, more importantly, in motivating many to commit their lives to serving God among Muslims.”

For Tara Hamstra, a 2004 MBI graduate who is currently serving as a teacher in Bogotá, Colombia, student missions conferences played an important role in helping her gear up for the mission field. “MBI prepared me for going into the mission field, especially by providing opportunities for individual interactions with missionaries. It was amazing to actually be able to talk to and share with missionaries during missions conference, and be encouraged and challenged by their experiences,” she said.

“Missions conference serves as a time for students already committed to missions



James: The Wisdom of True Faith

Picture, if you will, what Noah's faith would have meant without works. Can you imagine him saying, "I know it's going to rain, and I believe it's going to rain, but theoretically speaking, can't I technically get to heaven without building the ark?"

Noah had no problem reconciling the power of faith and the importance of works. We owe our existence to that truth. So why do we so often have difficulty believing that good works are essential to the Christian life?

James makes that point clear, even if it raises tough questions in our minds. The bottom line is, faith isn't theoretical. It's real, and it needs to show up in our everyday activities.

And *Today in the Word* is dedicated to making the truth of God's Word real and visible in your life. We'll be focusing on James all month, and it's filled with practical ways we can show our faith.

Our prayer is that you are challenged every day to live out your faith so that everyone around you might see Christ's love shine through you.

**2004 Gift Income Goal:
\$1,535,000**

**Received through
press time (Aug. 2):
\$960,941**

MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE'S

**TODAY
IN THE
WORD**

OCTOBER 2004

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 10

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Bruce W. Anderson

MANAGING EDITOR
Heather Moffitt

ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Adam Kellogg
Elena Mafer

WRITERS
David Moffitt
Heather Moffitt

DESIGN
Nancy Rudd

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Paul Currie

PERMISSIONS
Renee Oommen

1-800-DL MOODY
(356-6639)

www.moody.edu

Moody Bible Institute is the sole publisher of *Today in the Word*, copyright © 2004 by Moody Bible Institute. All rights reserved. Please direct all *Today in the Word* inquiries to Constituency Response, 820 N. LaSalle Blvd., Chicago, IL 60610. Scripture taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. Printed in the U.S.A. *Today in the Word* is published monthly.

PRINTED ON 30% RECYCLED PAPER

PRESIDENT
Joseph M. Stowell
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
Edward W. Cannon
PROVOST
Charles Dyer
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
Richard K. Campbell
GENERAL COUNSEL
Robert Gunter
STEWARDSHIP
Richard R. Epps

TRUSTEE CHAIRMAN
Paul H. Johnson

TRUSTEES
John Elsen
Robert D. Erickson
Thomas S. Fortson
Jerry B. Jenkins
Roy H. Nyholm
Bervin C. Peterson
David Schipper
Joseph M. Stowell
George Sweeting
Paul Von Tobel
John Wauterlek
Paul W. Wills
Richard Yook

VICE PRESIDENTS
Bruce Cain
Thomas H. L. Cornman
Lloyd R. Dodson
Heidy Hartley
Joseph Henriques
Michael J. Kane
Frank W. Leber Jr.
Robert C. Neff
Thomas A. Shaw
Greg R. Thornton

*Consider it
pure joy,
my brothers,
whenever you
face trials of
many kinds.*

JAMES 1:2



TODAY AT MOODY

Join us this month as we start our journey of prayer and learning about faith. While praying for MBI, please mention the faculty of our Graduate School: Berlean Burris, James Coakley, and Marvin Newell who celebrated their 5th anniversary at Moody this year.

Read: James 1:1-4

TODAY IN THE WORD



Selection as a guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery is one of the highest honors in the U.S. military. Those who are chosen must adhere to strict guidelines that govern what they wear, drink, and say. These guards are not permitted to swear or drink alcohol, even off-duty, at any point during their commission. They are to live in a way that reflects the honor and responsibility they have.

As we begin a new month and a new study, we will be reminded by James, the brother of our Lord, that genuine followers of Christ are known by their wisdom, or, to put it differently, by the way they live. In our journey through this epistle, we will discover James pointing us to a number of characteristics or markers by which we can discern Christian wisdom.

The first indicator he directs our attention to is joyful perseverance. Trials of many kinds, James tells us, ought to be greeted with a joyful spirit. Initially this strikes us as somewhat disturbing. Are we to go about seeking trials and rejoicing in sorrows for their own sake? The context of the passage suggests otherwise. James does not call us to seek out trials, but to be joyful in the face of trials that arise. Our joy does not stem from the trials themselves, but from the recognition that these trials help us grow to be more mature Christians by

allowing us to practice perseverance. We only learn about sticking with Jesus in the hard times by actually going through the hard times and sticking with Jesus. That is, trials offer us the opportunity to grow in our faith—and as a result, grow in Christian maturity.

It is this ultimate goal, maturity in Christ, that forms the basis of joyful perseverance. There are some lessons that we can learn only by putting our faith into action. We learn to persevere only by persevering. Since we can move toward maturity by learning to persevere, we can become more mature by undergoing trials. Thus, wise Christians face trials with joyful perseverance because they cherish the results. They know that God will use such circumstances to produce maturity in their lives.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



If you are just joining *Today in the Word*, you may want to read portions of our study last month on the book of Job. (It's available at www.todayintheword.org in the archives.) Our study of the book of James and a life of wisdom is the perfect follow-up to the themes of suffering and God's purpose for our lives that we examined last month.

Even though suffering is painful, we can still have joy through it because we know that God redeems that pain to make us more like Christ. What a great God we serve!

Read: James 1:5–8

TODAY IN THE WORD



The story of Rehoboam has the marks of a classic tragedy. He inherited the throne of the kingdom of Israel from his father Solomon at the height of its power and prestige. Torn between the wise advisers of his father and those his own age, he decided to take the foolish advice of the younger counselors and increase the tax burden on the people. As a result, the kingdom of Israel split in two parts—Rehoboam governed only the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Wisdom is generally the fruit of age and experience. However, those who believe in Christ are openly invited by God to receive wisdom from Him at any time. Whether young or old, all the Christian needs to do to grow in wisdom is ask God. When we find ourselves facing trials and we realize that we lack the wisdom necessary to get through them, God has promised to give us that wisdom if we simply ask Him.

We saw yesterday that trials are a means to strengthening our faith and moving us toward maturity. One way that they do this is by showing us the ways in which we lack wisdom. Trials often bring us to the point where we are able to recognize that our own resources are insufficient to cope with a situation. At such points we can see more clearly just how much we are dependent upon God. The very act of turning to Him and asking for more wisdom is an

act that produces stronger faith and greater maturity.

Yet with this promise of divine aid James also gives a solemn warning. When we approach God in the midst of trials we must not doubt Him. James presents a picture of two very different people here. One approaches God in the midst of a trial recognizing the need for God's wisdom to persevere through the struggle. To such a person God graciously provides wisdom. The other person sends up prayers for aid, but not from faith. This person, who is blown around like a wave of the sea, uses prayer more as a lucky charm—just one more base to cover—than as a genuine plea for divine wisdom. This person will not grow in faith as a result of suffering. As Christians, we are called to redeem suffering by allowing it to drive us closer to the God we serve.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Whether you are young or old, God offers you His wisdom. This isn't just the ability to have the right ideas about life—it's also the ability to live life the right way.

If you are facing a trial today, spend some additional time in prayer asking the heavenly Father for wisdom. He delights to answer our prayers and hear our hearts. Acknowledge that you are dependent on God, and express your trust in Him as the only source for healing and direction in life.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God . . . and it will be given to him.

JAMES 1:5



TODAY AT MOODY

Today, continue to uphold in prayer the Graduate School faculty asking the Holy Spirit to guide John Fuder, Daniel Green, Walter McCord, William Thrasher, Julius Wong Loi Sing, and David Woodall in training their students for higher level of ministry and service.

*The brother
in humble
circumstances
ought to take
pride in his
high position.*

JAMES 1:9



TODAY AT MOODY

Please remember in your prayers today the ministry of Moody's Provost, Dr. Charles Dyer. We thank the Lord for His favor and grace toward Moody Bible Institute and for the advance of biblical education at MBI under Dr. Dyer's leadership.

Read: James 1:9–11; Mark 10:17–31

TODAY IN THE WORD



A recent commercial depicts a man practicing all the ways he can tell his friends about his great new set of wheels. Standing in front of a mirror he practices dropping nonchalant comments into his imagined conversations. “Oh,” he says tossing his head in the direction of his car, “that’s just my new car.” Of course, the point of this commercial is that the man is so proud of his new vehicle that he desperately wants to show it off to everyone.

In our culture, almost from infancy we receive the notion that we should be proud of our material possessions. Cars, houses, boats, and other possessions are viewed as badges of happiness and success in this world. Those without these things are likely to be pitied rather than praised. Yet the Bible calls for a radical inversion of this way of thinking. James tells us plainly that Christians who are poor ought to take pride in their humble circumstances while the wealthy, instead of boasting in their possessions, ought to take pride in their lowliness (vv. 9–10).

The point James seeks to impress on us is that God cares nothing for the wealth we tend to value. In God’s eyes the things we so often wrongly treasure are little more than wildflowers whose beauty quickly withers away (v. 11). Instead, God values spiritual humility. Being poor does not guarantee acceptance with God any more

than it provides immunity from greed and envy. On the other hand, if wealth is attended by privilege in this world, Jesus warned that it also brings certain dangers (cf. Mark 10:17–31). The situation is similar to that of encountering trials. Those who never face them will have a weaker faith than those who do because trials are a means of growing in faith. The wealthy of the world may learn to value the wrong things and are simply not forced, in the way the poor often are, to depend daily on God’s provision for their very life.

What is more, Christians can rightfully take pride in this spiritual humility. This may sound contradictory at first, but the idea is that believers are called to “show off” their humility to the world by living humbly to glorify Christ.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Living humbly in a materialistic culture can be a challenge for all of us. But we can take steps to reclaim our identity, away from our stuff.

First, we shouldn’t attempt to live beyond our means. Next, we should always acknowledge God as the ultimate source of our possessions. Third, we should remember that many people in our world have far less than we do. We would do well to remember the attitude of Job: “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (Job 1:21).

Read: James 1:12; 1 Corinthians 15:42–58

TODAY IN THE WORD



A group of students at Princeton University were polled on their ideas about the value of education. “Why should you pay more money for a prestigious university? Is it worth it?” The students almost all answered that it was, and one young man explained why. “You need to get the best education you can so you can get the best job you can. You need to make lots of money so you can afford to send your kids to the best schools, too.”

Most Americans agree that education is valuable, but the young Princeton student was describing a version of the contemporary American rat race: work and strive to get more stuff so that your kids are able to work and strive for more stuff. It’s an accurate description of many lives. The book of James calls us to a higher goal, one that is really worth all our effort and pursuit.

In our verse for today, James urges us to persevere—a word we’ve seen repeatedly in previous verses—so that we can obtain the crown of life. The word crown is qualified by the addition “of life” so that it is clearly identified with life itself. James is saying that our perseverance—with all that it means, as we’ve seen the past few days—is integrally tied to the eternal life promised by God.

James contrasts worldly riches and glory with things of eternal value (vv. 9–11). Those

who persevere in times of trial, even though they may appear lowly according to the world’s standards, will gain something far more valuable than fancy cars, exotic vacations, a prestigious education, or worldly fame. Those who persevere and stick with Jesus receive eternal life in God’s presence in a resurrected body (see 1 Cor. 15).

In any endeavor, we often hit a wall where we are tempted to lose the motivation to go on. This is true in the Christian life as well. When we experience this, it is critically important to remember the reward for staying true and pressing on. Those people who continue to follow Christ by grace experience life with Him forever.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Do you know what tempts you away from following Christ? It may be an experience of suffering, or it may be an experience of wealth that distracts your attention from the crown of life.

As we go through James, we find practical measures to combat both of these temptations. Prayerfully evaluate your own walk with the Lord, and ask the Holy Spirit to highlight areas that may need attention. Then make note of the direction in James that addresses your struggle. God has promised to be with us, even as we battle temptation (1 Cor. 10:13)!

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, . . . he will receive the crown of life.

JAMES 1:12



TODAY AT MOODY

Thank you for lifting up in prayer the MBI Stewardship division headed by Dr. Richard Epps. Please ask for guidance and wisdom from God as we strive to honor Him with the resources, skills, and talents He entrusted to Moody.

*For the wages
of sin is
death, but the
gift of God is
eternal life in
Christ Jesus
our Lord.*

ROMANS 6:23



TODAY AT MOODY

During the next few days, please join us in prayer for the Regional Representatives team, as they represent Moody to our donors across the country. We start with prayer for Howard Brown, Robert Catteau, Dennis Getz, and Ronald Gibbs.

Read: James 1:13–15; Genesis 3:1–24

TODAY IN THE WORD



Anyone who has ever spent much time around children has experienced the frustration of their disobedience. “Why do you keep getting candy out of the jar when you know I see you and you know you’ll be punished!” one exasperated mother asked her son. “Because I want candy,” was his honest reply.

We may develop more subtle methods of disobedience as we get older, but our basic reason for sinning against God is usually the same: there is something we want, and we think that maybe this time we’ll get away with it. Our passage today has strong words to describe the consequences of following our own desires apart from God.

James has set up a contrast between two ways that we can choose to live our lives. As he has described in earlier verses, we can persevere in faith, receive wisdom from God, and ultimately obtain eternal life (v. 12). Or, we can follow our own desires, sin against God, and ultimately receive the consequence of death (v. 15).

When the choice is spelled out in black and white, it seems obvious that we would want to choose life. The problem comes when our own desires present themselves to us as wisdom. This was the case with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (see Gen. 3). As the serpent tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, she rationalized to herself that indeed, this must be the

right choice—after all, the fruit was tasty, attractive, and would make her wise (Gen. 3:6)! But her desire blinded her to the reality that eating this fruit contradicted a direct command of God.

We cannot rely on our own sense of right and wrong. We may rationalize that something is good for us when in fact it may be spiritual poison. James gives us a strategy to help us avoid the mistake of Adam and Eve. When we are faced with temptation, we do not have to figure out by ourselves what we should do. We can turn to God in prayer and ask for true wisdom from Him (v. 5).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Even some churches have been deceived by their own rationalizations and have decided that what God has called “sin” should be called “blessed.” This should reinforce our attitude of humility before God, recognizing how easily we can be led astray.

In your prayer time today, pray especially for your own church and pastor, that God would grant wisdom to see and live truthfully. Our culture encourages spiritual compromise, and our desire to fit in can lead us to sin. Pray that God will keep our churches pursuing the goal of honoring Christ above all.

Read: James 1:16–18; Romans 8:18–25

TODAY IN THE WORD



One of the earliest lessons that parents teach their children is not to take candy from strangers. This seems odd to young children—candy is good, so someone offering it must be good, too. Parents have to help their children understand that candy is only good when it comes from an adult who loves them; otherwise, the candy that seems good could actually hurt them.

Yesterday we looked at the example of Adam and Eve and the relationship between desires that contradict God's commands and sin. As descendants of Adam and Eve, we are all sinners. We all stand to inherit death, which is the result of our sinful choices that rebel against God (see Rom. 6:23).

But God was not willing to give up on His creation. By means of sending Jesus, the same God who spoke a word and created all things has spoken a Word again to bring new birth. Our birth into this world will eventually end in our physical death. But our spiritual birth is into eternal life.

James wants us to understand that the truly good things in life actually come from God (v. 17). The “candy” offered by the world may appear to bring happiness, fame, wealth, or security, but it really leads to death and decay. Christians must remember that God has far greater blessings in store for those who love Him.

As those who believe in Jesus, the Word of truth, we are the firstfruits of a redeemed and renewed creation (v. 18). We have been given the greatest gift of all through our salvation from the curse of sin and death.

In addition to this perfect gift from our Father, God continues to provide us with other good gifts, such as wisdom, encouragement, and direction in life.

We should also note that the gift of our salvation impacts not just us, but also the rest of creation. Our heavenly Father loves us and the world He created, and our redemption is the first sign that He will one day deliver us from the curse of sin and death forever (cf. Gen. 3:14–19; Rom. 8:18–25).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Part of wisdom is knowing the difference between gifts that are truly good and those that will lead us astray. God is the source of all good things in our lives, and those blessings should point us toward Him.

Think through the things in life that you value, whether possessions, family, relationships, health, or attitudes. Do these direct your heart toward Christ or away from Him and toward yourself? Ask God for the wisdom to discern His good gifts in your life and thank Him for His loving provision.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

JOHN 3:16



TODAY AT MOODY

As we continue to lend our prayer support to Moody's Regional Representatives, please add John Gregory, Robert Hogerwerf, Bryan Johnson, Karl Knudsen, and Thomas Mahugh to your prayer list today. Pray for God's protection and safe travel for them.

Question & Answer

Q *Is it okay for a Christian to go on strike?*

A Yes, with some reservations. Bible students who say, "No, it is not okay," point to Ephesians 6:5–8 and Colossians 3:22–25 as the definitive answer to the question. In those texts, slaves are told to obey their masters—which is interpreted as, "No, do not strike." But a slave's relationship with his master (i.e. owner) is not analogous to an ordinary employee's relationship with the shop or company for which he works. He has neither legal nor contractual obligation to obey his employer, no matter what the circumstances.

The question implies employment in a union shop, in which case the question should have been asked before taking the job. For employment in a union shop, the job seeker concedes a measure of control over his or her job to the local union. This includes automatic deduction of dues *and* the decision to strike. If, after a vote, the union bosses call for a strike, the members are obliged to go on strike. Only if a Christian decides that the strike is *morally wrong* should he refuse to join the strike, in which case he should be prepared to pay whatever penalty may be imposed for breaking ranks.

For information about the rights and obligations of a union member, and the penalty for breaking ranks, one should consult a labor lawyer.

But if possible, do it before taking the job.

Q *I don't like any of the candidates for the upcoming election. My conscience tells me that they are phonies. Should I sit out the election?*

A Don't give up your vote; give it to the person who, in your opinion, is the best of two or more choices. Meanwhile, rethink the role of *conscience* as contrasted with the *mind*. Because of conscience, you might sit out an election. But it is your mind, not your conscience, which tells you that the candidates are phonies. My mind may reach a different conclusion: that the candidates are not phonies. Different Christians may make up their minds in different ways on these matters.

Q *Did Jesus take His humanity with Him at the Ascension? If so, why? Does He need it in heaven?*

A Yes, Christ retains His humanity forever. The explanation lies in the nature of our relationship with him. It is an organic union, expressed in the words *in Christ*. Paul uses the expression *in Christ* (or *in Him*) more than 160 times. Only *in Christ* can we be justified,

redeemed, or sanctified. As one theologian explains, "The organic can only exist by the union formed by a head and members *having the same nature*" (italics added). Therefore, Christ must remain a man forever. See Hebrews 2:14–17. The bodily resurrection of Christ immortalized His humanity in transfigured, glorified form. It is the permanence of His humanity that guarantees the permanence of His work on our behalf. Throughout eternity, He remains "the first-born among many brethren."

Q *1 Corinthians 15:28 says, "The Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all." Does this mean that Jesus will be inferior to God in the eternal state?*

A No, it does not. Superiority and inferiority are not the issue. The operative words in the verse are "made subject to," and the issue is function: the respective functions of the Father and the Son throughout eternity. To understand the text (admittedly, not an easy task) we need to read every line from verse 24 to verse 28: "Then comes the end (*thought by many Bible students to be the end of the millennial reign of Christ*), when he hands over the kingdom to God

the Father . . ." and "then the Son himself." At the end, when every form of opposition to God and Christ (including death and Hades) has been abolished, the Son will hand everything over to the Father. The Son retains His humanity, and will forever continue to function as Savior, Redeemer, First-born among many, etc. At the same time, for a timeless eternity, the triune God will be "all in all."

Q *What is fellowship? I am a new Christian and I hear this word a lot.*

A The term is frequently used loosely to indicate pious socializing. It is derived from a Greek word (*koinonia*) that is translated "fellowship" 15 times in the KJV and 12 times in the NIV translation of the Bible. In other places, the same word is rendered "participation" (1 Cor. 10:16), a "sharing" (Philem. 6), and "communion," in the KJV where more recent translations prefer "sharing" or "partnership" (Phil. 1:5).

We share a common life in Christ, and, therefore, we are partners in the truth, sharing the love and warmth that we have as Christians. True fellowship is infinitely richer than mere socializing, though it surely includes socializing.

True

fellowship

is infinitely

richer

than mere

socializing.

*A word aptly
spoken is like
apples of gold
in settings
of silver.*

PROVERBS 25:11



TODAY AT MOODY

Again, MBI's Regional Representatives are in our prayers today. Please uphold in prayer William Murphy, David Martin, Daniel Mills, Gerald Odell, and David Pavelec as they form relationships with our donors. Thank the Lord for their faithful service.

Read: James 1:19–21; Romans 8:5–17

TODAY IN THE WORD



A caller to a radio talk show discussing careers wondered why his best employees seemed to be leaving. “I increased their salaries and gave them the best projects,” he explained. “But we have a few run-ins and they leave anyway.” When the host asked the caller to describe the “run-ins,” he mentioned that they were incidents when he yelled at his employees for their mistakes. “I think that’s the problem,” the host declared. “People don’t want to deal with anger, even it comes with more money. I think you need some anger management courses if you really want to keep your employees working for you!”

Anger management . . . in our society this is the answer to uncontrolled rage that disrupts our families, relationships, and workplaces. These techniques may be helpful, but as we see in our passage today, James also talks about anger management, and prescribes a radical solution—a new life in Christ that makes new attitudes and behaviors possible.

As we have already seen, our desires lead us into sin (vv. 14–15). But God desires that we live righteously. Yet He doesn’t just declare that He expects this from us without also providing the means to make it possible. Verse 21 points toward the resource: “Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”

Romans 8:5–17 elaborates on the difference between a life controlled by the sin nature and a life controlled by the Holy Spirit. Because of our belief in Jesus Christ, we have His Spirit at work in us, leading us to life (Rom. 8:11). We are not struggling alone to live righteously to please God—we are able to live rightly because the Holy Spirit gives us the power to resist sin (Rom. 8:13).

James notes that being controlled by anger is an example of following desires that lead to death. In contrast, those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit should be characterized by a spirit of humility; they do not seek their own advantage and become enraged when they don’t get their way. Instead, they are eager to hear out the other person.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Anger may be a significant struggle in your life, and if so, these verses should remind you of the urgency of submitting this to the Holy Spirit so that you will not be dominated by your temper.

There is practical advice for all of us in these verses. “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry” (v. 19). Make this your prayer today, that you will be prompted by the Holy Spirit to listen when you feel like putting out your own opinion first, and filled with love instead of anger. These steps produce the life that pleases God.

Read: James 1:22–25

TODAY IN THE WORD



The American obsession with looking our best seems to be spreading to an unlikely group. A new product line of personal grooming products, including shampoo, conditioner, and cologne, is being marketed for boys aged 9 to 16. “Although the stereotype is that young boys don’t care about how they look, our research indicates that even 10-year-old boys say looking good is one of their top priorities,” the brand manager said.

In our passage today, James uses the illustration of looking in the mirror to drive home his point about living wisely. All of us—even 10-year-old boys, apparently—can relate to the experience of examining our appearance in the mirror. Of course, James’s point isn’t personal grooming; he’s talking about the condition of our spiritual appearance.

James continues the discussion of whether we will follow our own desires or the desires of God. He has already clarified that the path we choose will lead either to death or to life, and we have seen that part of the process of following God means living humbly rather than being controlled by anger (v. 21). This humble acceptance of the word is not simply a passive activity, however. James explains what this acceptance really means.

First, listening to the word is a key component. We need to make sure that we are spending

time in God’s Word, through our own Bible study and hearing Scripture taught. Apart from studying the Bible and hearing biblical teaching, we cannot even begin to know what God’s will is for our lives.

But listening alone is not enough. The second critical step is to obey what the Word says. If we are only reading the Bible but not putting into practice what it teaches us, then we are deceiving ourselves. We are in a position to believe that we are pleasing God when in fact we are not living righteously.

Those who humbly accept the word through both listening and obedience choose a path that leads to life, the path of blessing from God. Wise living depends on obedience to the Word of God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Ask the Lord to hold a spiritual mirror before your life today. Are there any areas that aren’t pleasing to Him?

Don’t let this study of the book of James be an academic exercise that fills your head with more knowledge but leaves your heart unchanged. As you are prompted and convicted by God’s Word, respond in obedience. Knowledge of Scripture is important, but knowledge alone is not enough to put us on the path of righteousness and God’s blessing.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.

JAMES 1:22



TODAY AT MOODY

We are grateful for the contribution of Moody’s Regional Representatives to making our tuition-paid education a reality. As we conclude our prayers for this dedicated team, please remember Marvin Rhodes, Kenneth Senes, Jim Wick, and Timothy Wise.

*For out of
the overflow of
the heart the
mouth speaks.*

MATTHEW 12:34



TODAY AT MOODY

Frank Leber, Vice President of Information Systems, requests your prayer support for the mission of his department of providing the best possible computer service to all the ministries of MBI. Praise the Lord for their skills, experience, and commitment to excellence.

Read: James 1:26–27; Matthew 12:33–37

TODAY IN THE WORD



In *My Fair Lady*, the musical adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, main character Eliza Doolittle sings in response to declarations of love by her suitor, "Don't talk of love lasting through time, make me no undying vow—show me now!"

In our culture of the sarcastic one-liner and the quick retort, it's easy to think that matching our words with deeds isn't really that important. But James shows us otherwise and points out the spiritual significance of this very issue.

We saw yesterday that James warned us about the possibility of deceiving ourselves. Simply listening to God's Word does not make us right before God. We must also obey. Today's verses give us a concrete example of that obedience: the connection between our words and deeds.

So far, James has set up contrasts between the path to life and the path to death, worldly wealth and spiritual riches, and control by sinful desires and God's desires. Again, we see two opposing illustrations of James's point.

First, we have someone who imagines himself to be a good, religious person. But his own desires control him, manifested in his lack of control over what he says (v. 26). In verse 19 we had the illustration of anger controlling someone; now we

see the tongue controlling someone. This indicates that God's desires are not the focus and pursuit of this individual, and he is sadly mistaken if he believes that God is pleased with him.

On the other hand, we see someone who does seek God's desires. This is evident through caring for those in need. The contrast is interesting here: it isn't between speaking rashly and speaking thoughtfully. It's a control issue—who will control our lives? Ourselves and our desires? Or God and His desires? When we pursue God, we will guard our lives from the evil desires that dominate the world (v. 27).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Tomorrow we will gather with other believers in church, where we will likely sing hymns and songs of praise to God. We will join in prayers that bless the name of the Lord. This is appropriate and fitting for our corporate worship of God. But worship doesn't end there—it extends to every moment of every day. Our worship includes controlling our tongues with our family and coworkers. It includes meeting the needs of those around us. This is the life of worship that pleases God and indicates that we are truly seeking His desires.

Read: James 2:1–4; Deuteronomy 10:14–20

TODAY IN THE WORD



As debates about higher education in America have intensified, from the rising cost of tuition to affirmative action to relevance for jobs, admissions committees at colleges and universities have faced greater scrutiny. Several elite universities have admitted that they give preferential treatment to applicants from wealthy families for two reasons—not only can their parents afford to pay the entire tuition bill, but they also might be courted as major donors to the university.

In our passage today, James makes clear that this type of preferential treatment should never exist in the church. If we are to live wisely and please God, we cannot be characterized by discrimination on the basis of wealth.

It may appear from the chapter break that James is changing topics, but actually he is continuing his themes from chapter one: submitting ourselves to God's desires is the path to life and blessing. We've already looked at his examples of anger and our tongues; now we see another instance of how we should be controlled by God's desire—the way that we treat both rich and poor people.

At first glance, James's instruction may seem rather easy to follow. But when we are honest about our natural tendencies and preferences, we must admit that it is easier to go to church with people who look like us and who won't embar-

ass our sensibilities. Besides, those who come with greater resources can support the church financially, while those who are poor will probably require more assistance.

When our preference leads us to treat people in the church in a different way, we are guilty of judging with evil thoughts (v. 4). These judgments are contrary to the way God judges, and so if we are operating by preferential treatment, we are elevating our own desires above God's. God's wisdom is not concerned with outward appearances, but cares deeply about genuine faith.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Many American churches appear to be clusters of "sameness"—same race, same socioeconomic status, even same age. If this happens because the churches aren't welcoming others who are different, it's violates God's wisdom.

Prayerfully consider how you might be able to minister to poor believers in your church or area. It might be as simple as extending a warm welcome to activities at your church, or perhaps helping with a clothing bank or food pantry that your church supports. See how you can conform your own preferences to God's desire.

You are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.

DEUTERONOMY 10:19



TODAY AT MOODY

James Lofton, Pepi Manieson, and Benjamin Spencer from the World Wide Web Support department maintain and update Moody's Web sites, as well as provide uninterrupted Internet connection for the Institute. Would you pray for them today?

*But many
who are
first will be
last, and the
last first.*

MARK 10:31



TODAY AT MOODY

Students often deal with complicated issues in their life on campus—and wise counsel is invaluable. It's important that we pray for the Counseling Services staff—Amy Baker, Gayla Gates, and Timothy Hodges—and ask for godly wisdom and understanding in their interaction with students.

Read: James 2:5–7

TODAY IN THE WORD



An old proverb describes the person who treats a generous individual badly as being like the dog who bites the hand that feeds it. James might describe his readers today as a dog who feeds the hand that bites it! The beneficiaries of these readers' favoritism were the same people who had exploited them.

Yesterday we saw James's assessment that favoritism based on wealth is really an exercise of evil judgment. In our text today, he further explores this point.

James clarifies who exactly these rich visitors to the church are. It is bad enough to treat wealthy believers better than poor ones, but from today's verses, it appears that these rich visitors aren't even Christians! They are characterized by bringing lawsuits, exploiting the poor, and slandering the name of the Lord (vv. 6–7). Their concern is what they can gain for themselves and how they can use others for their own benefit.

We may be tempted to think these believers were either extremely deluded or very materialistic if they were trying so hard to impress these wealthy people. Before we rush to judgment, though, we need to understand that these rich visitors were people of considerable power and influence. Seeking to please and impress them would be the natural human response—

out of fear or a desire for self-protection from their lawsuits and exploitation.

James is inverting our natural system of looking at things here. By favoring the rich and judging on outward appearances, we end up slighting those whom God loves and who love God. Our desire to impress those who are wealthy or who have power over us but who do not honor God reveals that we are operating according to the world's values and not according to God's desires.

Living wisely means that we try to evaluate others on the basis of spiritual realities, not external factors like wealth or power. Our God is the ultimate source of all wealth and power, and He is the only one whom we should seek to please.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



James tells us that having a proper understanding of power is an important part of living wisely.

If you find yourself tempted to give preferential treatment to people that the world considers powerful, even if they are ungodly, ask the Lord to help you recognize His power and give you the desire to honor Him and those who love Him. You may run the risk of offending a powerful person in your life, but better to glorify God than to pacify the world.

Read: James 2:8–11; Matthew 22:34–40

TODAY IN THE WORD



Four-year-old Chris eagerly waited for his neighbor Will to come over to

play. He arranged all his favorite toys in front of the door and announced to his mother that he was going to share all these toys with Will. When Will arrived and began to play with Chris's favorite fire truck, though, Chris shouted, "No! Mine!" and hit his friend. After he was disciplined, his mother asked, "I thought you were going to share your toys! What happened?" "I didn't know he was actually going to play with them!" Chris wailed.

As Chris discovered, it's easier to talk about sharing and loving our neighbor than to actually put it into practice. In our passage today, James emphasizes that if our actions don't match our words, those pious sounding phrases are actually worthless.

We've seen that judging by outward appearances is really judging with evil thoughts (v. 4), and we end up passing judgment on people whom God loves (v. 5). This judging is a clear violation of a scriptural command, and therefore it's a failure to live according to God's Word (1:22–25).

James continues to examine our obedience to the commands of Scripture and the desires of God. The command to love one's neighbor is one of the two commands that Jesus lists as fulfilling the entire Law (Matt. 22:34–40). James makes clear that when we show favorit-

ism, we fail to love our neighbor. And if we fail to love, we are sinning against God.

When we mix religious talk with the practice of favoritism, we are really practicing an empty, worthless, self-deceptive religion (1:26). Even if we think we are obedient on every other count, we are still failing to live wisely in a way that demonstrates our faith (v. 10).

God is pleased and our faith is genuine when we take care of those in our midst who are poor, needy, and powerless (v. 5; cf. Luke 6:20). It's often easier to quote entire chapters of the Bible than to give of our time, energy, or financial resources to help someone who seems so different from us. But if our knowledge of God's Word doesn't change our actions, it isn't really changing our hearts.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Certainly we must practice compassion with those in our own congregations who need our help. It's also appropriate for us to care for other believers around the world who face dire poverty.

If your church sponsors short-term work trips to help Christians in other countries, pray about how you could be involved. Perhaps you could support the trip financially, or even go on the trip yourself. You can also explore other ministries that provide clothes and books for needy children. Our talk of love needs to be matched by our acts of compassion.

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself.

LEVITICUS 19:18



TODAY AT MOODY

Speaking about students, today is a good opportunity to lift them up in prayer—MBI Missions Conference starts on campus and continues until October 15. We pray for the fruitful and spiritually enriching time as many of them respond to God's call to missions.

*This is how
my heavenly
Father will
treat each of
you unless you
forgive your
brother from
your heart.*

MATTHEW 18:35



TODAY AT MOODY

Please include Dr. Thomas Cornman, Vice President and Dean of Undergraduate School, in your prayers today. May

God's grace and encouragement follow Dr. Cornman and his team in their pursuit of higher levels of excellence in Christian education at Moody.

Read: James 2:12–13; Zechariah 7:1–14

TODAY IN THE WORD



A general contractor in Virginia was recently sued over a job he had not completed. A family expecting twins had paid him \$50,000 to add several rooms to their small house; he had torn off the back wall of the house and then abandoned the project. After the family won in court, however, the contractor filed for bankruptcy—so that the family still could not recover any of the money they had paid him or won in the settlement. They ended up losing their \$50,000 plus court costs, and they still have no back wall on their house.

Such stories of unscrupulous people who take advantage of others and manipulate the system to avoid punishment violate our sense of justice. It's even worse when those who claim to believe in God manipulate and exploit others.

God takes bad treatment of the poor and lowly very seriously. In our reading today from Zechariah, God speaks to the people of Judah in exile about their religious practices. He declares that even though there was an abundance of religious ritual—faithfully praying and observing fasts—they had mistreated the poor (Zech. 7:9–11). The consequence was judgment: God allowed Judah to be sent into exile and Jerusalem to be destroyed (v. 14). Without the action of mercy toward the needy, God was not impressed by the religious words.

James sets up another contrast in today's verses between mercy and judgment. As believers, we know that we have experienced the mercy of God in our salvation. Now we are to extend that mercy to others. Favoritism is the opposite of mercy—it is judgment. And if we are judging others by practicing favoritism, then we will find ourselves judged as well (see Matt. 18:21–35).

Throughout the past few days we have seen that favoritism toward the rich and powerful and discrimination against the poor is more than a matter of just being nice. These issues are directly related to whether we will obey God and live wisely.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Can you think of a specific person or family in your church, neighborhood, or workplace that could use help? If so, how can you reach out to assist them?

They might need financial assistance, but even more, they may need your friendship and encouragement. It should never be said of us as Christians that we have ostracized the poor and needy from our social circles. As the Lord brings names of people to mind, purpose to follow through on practicing generosity and mercy.

Read: James 2:14–19

TODAY IN THE WORD



In 2003, Bono (lead singer of the rock band U2) toured North American churches and Christian organizations as part of his efforts to raise money to combat AIDS in Africa. His message was blunt: it is hypocritical for Christians to profess to pray for the lost and dying around the world and yet refuse to get involved to help them.

Bono may not have been aware of the numerous efforts by evangelical Christians to minister to those in Africa afflicted with AIDS, but his point about the need for action was consistent with our text from James.

James has not quite finished driving home the importance of care for the lowly and poor in the church. He has already said that the failure to do so characterizes self-deluding religion (1:27). Now he says that this failure indicates a false or dead faith (v. 17). He is reiterating and illustrating his earlier point (1:27): that God is pleased by religious faith that expresses itself not just in words but also in deeds that care for the poor and needy.

He particularly emphasizes care for those in the church, using the term “brother or sister” to note that these particular needy are fellow believers (v. 15). They should be the special focus of our generosity and mercy. Good words and intentions alone do not measure up to God’s standard for the practice

of true faith.

If we truly want to live wisely, we need to pay careful attention to the list of things that James tells us to avoid. These include judging with evil thoughts (favoritism), opposing God’s judgments, and failing to show mercy. If these things characterize us, we have a worthless religion and dead faith. We can never enter into the fullness of our heavenly Father’s good gifts (1:17) when we are not following His desires.

This word is a strong challenge to us. Those who fail to care for the poor and lowly in their midst may be deceiving themselves when they claim to belong to Christ.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



If the strong message of the book of James has convicted your heart, take an extended time of prayer and confession today. Following God’s path puts us in conflict with our own natural impulses, and we won’t always avoid favoritism or show mercy. But God is always ready to hear our prayers of confession.

Ask the Lord to forgive you for things you have done and things you have left undone in these areas. With His forgiveness and the power of the Holy Spirit, we renew our commitment to practice our faith.

A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

MATTHEW 7:18



TODAY AT MOODY

Knowledgeable, godly faculty is essential for the education process at MBI—and we are proud of the caliber of the professors that God led to the Institute. It’s a privilege to offer a prayer to God on behalf of our Pastoral Studies faculty: John Koessler, Winfred Neely, and Dwight Perry.

The king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you."

JOSHUA 2:3



TODAY AT MOODY

Bruce Cain, Vice President of Facilities Management, welcomes the prayers of the Moody family for the Lord's help in the work of his team as they take care of the maintenance and construction on our campus—for God's glory!

Read: James 2:20–26

TODAY IN THE WORD



The story is told of a group of old men who used to gather at a country store in a small town in northern Louisiana every Saturday to swap fishing stories. They'd describe the number and size of their latest catch and give great details about the struggle to reel in a particularly feisty fish. One day a younger man mentioned to the store owner that he'd like to take the men on a nice fishing expedition. "Oh, no," the owner replied. "They never go fishing, especially not with each other. Then they'd have to back up all their stories with actual proof!"

The men may have been good storytellers, but they could hardly be considered fishermen if they never went fishing. James says that the same is true of us: if we only talk about being Christians and don't act like Christians, we are deceived if we think that we please God.

To reinforce his point, James goes back to Scripture to find examples of godly men and women. These people encourage us to realize that James isn't describing some sort of pie-in-the-sky idealism, but a way of life that others have actually followed.

James chooses Abraham and Rahab to illustrate his point. He wants to explore what made them pleasing to God. Was it the mere fact that they believed in Him? Clearly not, for even demons believe in God, yet they are neither pleasing God nor will they be saved (v. 19). But

Abraham and Rahab pleased God because their belief in Him caused them to live in obedience to Him.

Both Abraham and Rahab chose to fear God rather than men, and they did things that appeared crazy to everyone else. Abraham was willing to obey God even when it appeared he would lose all hope of having children (Gen. 22). His faith in God's promises compelled him to obey even when it seemed that God didn't make sense.

Rahab feared God more than the seemingly invincible king (Josh. 2–4). Rather than kowtow to the world's power, she demonstrated faith through her action to protect the people of God (v. 25). Both of these examples encourage us to make sure our faith is matched by actions that please God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As James demonstrates in this passage, we can learn from and be encouraged by the stories of people in the Old Testament who tried to walk by faith and please God.

Sometime this weekend try to take some time to read through the stories of Abraham in the book of Genesis and Rahab in the book of Joshua. Both of these characters were also commended in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11, another indication that God was pleased with them. As you read their stories, see what else they did that demonstrated a life of faith.

Read: James 3:1–2; Malachi 2:1–10

TODAY IN THE WORD



Perhaps you've seen the humorous poem describing a common perception

of pastors. After spending the week visiting with the sick, counseling the troubled, comforting the bereaved, overseeing meetings, and preparing sermons, the pastor is greeted on Sunday by a churchgoer who exclaims, "What a job you have—you only work one day a week!"

Almost every pastor—and hopefully every churchgoer!—recognizes that the role of the pastor takes far more than just a couple of hours on Sunday. In our passage today, James warns that those who are teachers in the church, which would include pastors as well as others in authority, should take their responsibility and their lives before God seriously.

This is not a new command in Scripture. We turn to our passage in Malachi to see God's warning to the priests of Israel after the nation had returned from the Exile. Here God threatens to judge them for their lack of listening to him or honoring His name. And how is this demonstrated? Through the way they minister and live.

First of all, God rebukes the priests for their false teaching (Mal. 2:8). Such teaching not only puts them in danger, but also causes the people listening to them to stumble. Those who teach God's people are responsible to proclaim truth, and the stakes for the

people of God are tremendous. No wonder that James says that those who teach will be judged more strictly (v. 1).

Second, note in Malachi how these priests are living. Their false teaching is manifested in a lifestyle that shows favoritism (Mal. 2:9). God clearly says that this is not His way of dealing with people, and yet the priests have persisted to act in a way that shows partiality. God is concerned with our correct doctrine, but He is equally concerned with our correct conduct.

Teachers in the church have a great responsibility, and those who abuse this authority through either false doctrine or sinful lifestyles will lead others astray. For this, they will be judged by God (cf. Rev. 2:14–16).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



If you have a position of authority in your church,

whether you teach the preschool Sunday school class or lead an adult Bible study, ask the Holy Spirit to keep your teaching truthful and your life pleasing to God.

All of us should be in prayer for the leaders of our churches. Today, pray specifically that your pastor would be kept strong in faith, and that this would be manifested through teaching truth and living wisely. Pray that God would bless those pastors who seek to honor and listen to Him.

For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction—because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty.

MALACHI 2:7



TODAY AT MOODY

In continuation of the prayers for the Facilities Management division, we invite you to include in your time with God today our Maintenance Services department headed by James Howard and his assistant David Ramsay.

*No man
can tame
the tongue.*

JAMES 3:8

Read: James 3:3–8

TODAY IN THE WORD



This past spring a particular athlete captured the attention of America. He had all the qualities we love in our sports heroes—he was big and fast and competitive and dominant. He did have a few unusual characteristics from the typical sports phenomenon . . . like four legs. He was the horse Smarty Jones, who won the first two races of the famed Triple Crown before coming in second at the Belmont Stakes.

Watching horses race is a vivid way to see the illustration James uses in this passage. These powerful animals careen around a track at speeds over 30 miles per hour, controlled and directed by riders whose weight is a fraction of the weight of the horse. How can a 100-pound jockey make a horse obey him? Through pulling at the reins that pull at the bit in the horse's mouth.

In verse 2, James says that the ability to control our tongues is a sign of maturity. It also signifies that we are able to control the rest of our bodies, which means that we are not following evil desires. Clearly, mastery over our tongues has implications for our spiritual health.

Our passage today contains two illustrations about this relationship between controlling the tongue and controlling the rest of our body ("body" is used here as a metaphor for all of our activities). Just as the small bit

in the horse's mouth and the small rudder of a ship exert influence and control over the direction either will go, so also the tongue can set the whole course of a person's life.

The problem is that the tongue is often an outlet for our evil desires. It reflects what is truly in our hearts—whether generosity and mercy, or favoritism and pride. Apart from God, the tongue is untamable. But we who are following Christ have the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to keep our tongues—and our whole bodies—conformed to God's desires. A lifestyle of wisdom and pleasing God begins with controlling our tongues.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



In our own power, there's no way that we will succeed in controlling the speech that comes from our mouths. Thankfully, we don't have to rely on our own power.

Meditating on God's Word is a wonderful way to help conform our thoughts and words to please God. Throughout the next several days, repeat and reflect on Psalm 19:14: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."



TODAY AT MOODY

We are thankful for the work of our carpenters in the up-keep of the campus—they set an example of Christian service with their commitment and positive attitude. Please pray for John Addison, Thomas Addison, James Menditto, Matthew Morris, and Daniel Salain.

Read: James 3:9–12

TODAY IN THE WORD



When Americans are polled about how much they trust certain people in various professions, used-car salesmen usually rank low on the list. As one survey participant said, “I can’t believe a word that comes out of a salesman’s mouth. He says, ‘I want to get you the best deal,’ and all I hear is, ‘I want to get all your money.’ I usually just figure that the opposite of whatever he says is really the truth.”

Unscrupulous car salesmen may have earned the reputation for their profession, but James wants to make sure that Christians aren’t described as liars and untrustworthy. In our passage today he continues his explanation of the impact of our speech on our ability to please God.

James thinks that duplicity—saying one thing and doing another, or in this case, saying two different things—is a serious problem. Earlier he noted that pious words that aren’t accompanied by merciful actions are the opposite of faith (2:16). Now he points out what is problematic about a duplicitous tongue.

This duplicity manifests itself as someone who will both bless God and slander people who love God. These patterns of speech should not characterize those who have been given new birth in Christ. We are changed springs, from which should flow

sweet and renewing waters—not old bitter water that pollutes everything around us (v. 11). And if we are truly changed, we should see the evidence of that in our speech.

The key point James emphasizes is consistency. We saw in earlier verses that our actions should be consistent with our profession of faith. Now James notes that our speech itself should be consistent with our profession of faith. We shouldn’t have words and deeds that don’t match up, nor should we have words of praise for God and then words of destruction for the people of God. Living wisely means that we strive for using our bodies—and our tongues—in a way that blesses both God and others.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



We can cultivate this habit of blessing both God and others through practice. In your prayer time, focus on praising God for who He is.

If you need ideas for specific praises, the Psalms and Revelation are both full of words of praise. Also make it a priority to bless those around you verbally today. Use your speech to encourage your family, neighbors, friends, coworkers—whomever God brings your way. Be particularly aware of speaking blessing to your brothers and sisters in Christ.

An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips. . . . Do not . . . use your lips to deceive.

PROVERBS 24:26–28



TODAY AT MOODY

Andrew Franklin and Thomas Jarnowski manage Moody’s Fleet Vehicles that are a valuable tool for our various ministries in Chicago’s urban environment. Your prayers will encourage them in their Christian walk as they serve God at Moody.

*Do not be
wise in your
own eyes; fear
the Lord and
shun evil.*

PROVERBS 3:7



TODAY AT MOODY

Richard Campbell, Chief Financial Officer, sees God's provision for the Institute every day in the area of finances. Please join him and his team in prayer and praise to the Lord for His faithfulness and for surrounding Moody with faithful friends.

Read: James 3:13–16

TODAY IN THE WORD



A new hit reality television show splashed into popular culture this past spring. Contestants on *The Apprentice* vied to work for real-estate mogul Donald Trump on a prestigious project with a reportedly huge salary. Those competing frequently made comments like, “I’ll do whatever it takes to win,” “I’m the most intense, competitive person here,” and “I won’t let anything stand in the way of my ambition.”

Business, sports, entertainment . . . all these aspects of our culture may prize and reward cutthroat competitiveness and driving ambition. But Scripture offers a different prescription for impressing God. Our lives should still have focus, but that focus is on how we can meet the needs of others and glorify God, not on what we can acquire for ourselves.

Throughout his letter, James has contrasted two ways of living. On the one hand, worldly wisdom encourages our desires to control us, which results in death. On the other hand is godly wisdom, which teaches that we submit ourselves to being led by God’s desires and find life. Here James gives some more specifics about the qualities and results of these two types of wisdom.

Worldly wisdom seeks to maximize its own position relative to others. This way of living is characterized by envy of what others have and ambition to get

more for oneself (v. 14). The source of this way of life is no less than Satan, the father of lies, himself (v. 15). The result is a lack of harmony between people, the practice of evil, and ultimately death.

Godly wisdom is shown by a lifestyle of humility that seeks to bless others. As we will see in more detail tomorrow, this way of life produces peace and life.

Although the world may think we’re crazy or lazy for not taking advantage of everyone around us, God’s Word instructs us that living wisely means that we live humbly. This is consistent with our profession of belief in Christ and our desire to be more like Him.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The apostle Paul echoes many of these same themes throughout his letters. As we seek to become more like Christ, Philippians 2 is one of the best passages to help us focus our hearts and lives on our Savior.

Read Philippians 2:1–11 today, perhaps writing verses 3 through 5 on a notecard to carry with you: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

Read: James 3:17–18; John 14:23–27

TODAY IN THE WORD



In 1969, former Beatles singer John Lennon recorded a song with lyrics

borrowed from demonstrations protesting the Vietnam War, “And all we are saying, is Give Peace a Chance.” For true peace, John Lennon needed to look in a different place. Just as the wisdom of the world doesn’t look like God’s wisdom, so also God’s peace doesn’t look like the peace that the world expects.

Our passage from James follows up on the description of godly wisdom that we examined yesterday. We saw that the source of earthly wisdom is the Devil and the result is death. Today we see that the source of heavenly wisdom is God and the results are life-giving: pure, peaceful, considerate, merciful, impartial, and sincere (v. 17). So many people in our world, like John Lennon, long for these qualities but don’t recognize that they are truly found only in following God’s path.

The emphasis on peacefulness in these verses is particularly interesting. This notion of peace captures much of what James describes as someone who lives wisely. The peaceful person is stable and not tossed about by doubt. The peaceful person isn’t controlled by anger and passions. The peaceful person is able to control his or her tongue. When we are following God’s desires instead of our own, there should be a definite peace that pervades every area of our lives.

This peacefulness produces a harvest of righteousness, meaning that living wisely will make us more and more like Christ and more and more pleasing to God (v. 18). This is not a stoic “stiff upper lip” in the face of life’s difficulties, but a trust that our heavenly Father holds all situations in His hand. Our example is Christ, who demonstrated this peace while enduring suffering. He was committed to following His Father’s desires, and the Holy Spirit enables us to have that same peace today (John 14:26–27).

James has outlined how we have lives that could be described as peaceful: we submit ourselves to God’s desires, show mercy to the needy, control our bodies, and live in a way consistent with claiming the name of Christ.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Many Christian hymns and songs have described the peace that comes from following God. From “I’ve Got Peace Like a River” to “It Is Well,” we have a wealth of music that reminds us of the blessing we have in Christ. The chorus to the hymn “Wonderful Peace” is particularly apt: “Peace, peace, wonderful peace / Coming down from the Father above. / Sweep over my spirit forever, I pray / in fathomless billows of love.” Choose a song that celebrates the peace of Christ and sing it in praise to Him today.

*Peace I leave
with you; my
peace I give
you. I do
not give to
you as the
world gives.*

JOHN 14:27



TODAY AT MOODY

Still keeping Moody’s finances in our prayers, we’d like to include the Investments department staff: William Barnhart, James Chadwick, Carolyn Johnson, Jeffery Knapp, and Charles Moeri. Ask God to bless their service at MBI.

*Ask and it
will be given
to you. . . .
In everything,
do to others
what you
would have
them do
to you.*

MATTHEW 7:7, 12



TODAY AT MOODY

Edward Cannon, MBI's Executive Vice President, will appreciate the prayers of the Moody family today. Please support before the Lord in prayer the efforts of Mr. Cannon to increase the effectiveness of Moody ministries by maximizing the use of the resources we have.

Read: James 4:1-3

TODAY IN THE WORD



A list of reasons why churches have split would be both humorous and sad.

While some divisions are caused by doctrinal disagreements or issues of truth, far more result from fights about what color the new carpet should be, what side the piano should be on, or whether the music leader wears a tie. How can a group of Christians become consumed with issues that appear so petty? It's not a new problem among believers, but it's comforting to know that God's Word addresses this tendency toward division.

We don't know much about the historical background of the book of James. Though scholars have drawn various conclusions from external evidence, we don't know exactly when it was written or who the specific audience was. It does seem likely that James is writing to a church experiencing internal conflict. Regardless of the original situation that prompted this letter, James's advice of living with godly wisdom is a recipe for a healthy church in any time or place.

Yesterday we explored James's emphasis on peace (3:17-18). In our passage today, he shifts his attention to conflict in the church. First, he considers the source of this conflict: following our own evil desires rather than the desires of God (4:1). When believers don't follow the guidelines of God, we reap the same consequence of

discord as unbelievers who follow earthly wisdom (3:16).

We know from what James has already taught that today's verses are an appalling way to describe relationships between Christians. Fighting, coveting, selfishness, evil desires, and wrong motives should have no place in interactions in the body of Christ.

Thankfully, James has already outlined an answer. When we experience conflicts in our relationship with other believers, we can find healing when we renew our commitment to living with godly wisdom. If Christians are united in seeking to please God, the result will be the peace described in James 3:17.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Have you ever experienced conflict—quarrels, selfishness, coveting—with another Christian? If you are in the midst of one of these fights now, realize that this attitude and behavior is not pleasing to God.

You cannot change someone else, but you are responsible before God for your own heart and conduct. The solution to your conflict starts with you purposing to live wisely, as James has detailed. Then you can commit to pray for your brother or sister with whom you disagree. The Holy Spirit can bring a harvest of righteousness when we sow the peace from a godly life.

Read: James 4:4–6; Hosea 4:1–5

TODAY IN THE WORD



The story of Hosea and Gomer perplexes many readers of Scripture. God

instructs the prophet Hosea to marry a woman he knows will be unfaithful—she not only commits adultery, she also becomes a prostitute that Hosea must buy back from those making a profit from her (see Hos. 1–3). God does explain the reason behind His mysterious command to Hosea: “Because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord” (Hos. 1:2).

Hosea 4 details the charge of adultery that the Lord brings against His people. Their sin includes unfaithfulness, a lack of love, cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery (vv. 1–2). God’s concern for His people on these issues hasn’t changed through the centuries; we will see that James rebukes his readers for many of these same sins, and we can be sure God still cares about these issues in our lives today.

Throughout his letter James has been drawing on themes that recurred in the Old Testament prophets, specifically justice and care for the poor (typified by the fatherless and the widow). In our passage today, James alludes to another theme frequently found in the Old Testament. The Prophets frequently refer to God’s relationship with Israel in terms of marriage, so it’s not surprising that Israel’s sin is referred to in terms of adultery. When Israel

acted in ways that were inconsistent with their relationship with God, they acted adulterously.

James is making the same point. Conflict in the church arises from unwise living and following our own desires. This is the same thing as living like the world—which is to say, it’s spiritual adultery and cheating on God (v. 4). Now we can understand why James uses such a strong tone here!

James highlights another contrast here between pride and humility (v. 6). Pride, pursuing our own way, puts us in opposition to God. Humility, however, positions us to receive blessings of grace from God (cf. 3:13). And this is the relationship God desires to have with us. James says that the Holy Spirit “envies intensely”—God loves His people, and wants us to walk in the path of life (v. 5).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Just as God used Hosea and Gomer to reflect Israel’s adultery with God, He uses the marriages of Christians to reflect the relationship between Christ and His people (see. Eph. 5).

Whether or not you’re married, the state of Christian marriages reflects on all believers as Christ’s bride. Take a few moments to read Ephesians 5 and pray through the passage for believers who are married. Pray that Christians will be a testimony of God’s love and faithfulness to a watching world.

Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

JAMES 4:4



TODAY AT MOODY

As part of the Stewardship division, Debra Ekerholm and Brenda McCord work hard to form and develop relations with our donors across the U.S. Ask for God’s encouragement in their ministry.

*The fear
of the
Lord is the
beginning of
wisdom.*

PROVERBS 9:10



TODAY AT MOODY

Lloyd Dodson, Vice President of Human Resources, has been serving the Moody community for many years leading a staff of godly men and women. Our prayer is that, while helping Moody employees grow professionally, the HR staff will also grow as a team and that God will sustain them with His strength.

Read: James 4:7–10; Joel 2:12–17

TODAY IN THE WORD



Pete Rose, known by the nickname “Charlie Hustle,” was always a baseball player that inspired strong feelings. Fans of his teams usually loved his hard-nosed play and all-out effort every minute of a game. Opponents usually hated his cocky attitude and in-your-face style. But neither love nor hate made any difference when Rose was banned from the game, the penalty for betting on baseball. Since then, Rose has written a book and gone on talk shows to proclaim his regret over his actions, but so far the ban remains in effect despite his declarations of contrition.

It’s a terrible feeling to know we deserve what has happened to us—and there’s nothing we can do to make the situation right again. Following the discussion of spiritual adultery, James addresses this problem. What if we have been following our own desires? What if we have been sinning against God? What if we haven’t been living wisely? What do we do?

With instructions like those in verse 9, this may seem like a depressing passage. Actually, it’s one of the most hopeful texts in Scripture. James gives us clear instructions on how we can renew and restore our relationship with God after we have sinned.

First, we must forsake our other love; that is, we must reject the temptations of the Devil to follow our own desires, to act proudly, to participate in

conflict with other Christians, and to show favoritism—all the sins James has addressed in this book so far (v. 7). Second, we must submit again to God, pleading for the Holy Spirit to guard our hearts and help us follow His desires (v. 8). Mercifully, we’re told that when we humble ourselves before God, He will meet us there and restore us.

Finally, we must truly repent, grieve, and mourn for our sin (v. 9). We can never make the mistake of taking our sin lightly—it is adultery, a violation of our Christian profession of faith. It should break our hearts that we embrace sin. When we repent, God provides us with the forgiveness to change the way we are living, so that we can live wisely.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



In light of the command in verse 7 to “resist the devil,” let’s focus attention today on ways we can resist the temptations that threaten our relationship with God.

First, are there sins that cause you to leave the path of living wisely? Whether it’s pride, gossip, favoritism, or a contentious spirit, think through the ways that you can resist. Make a list—often writing helps you think more clearly—of practical resistance. Perhaps you need to spend more time in prayer and Bible study, or you need to resist a materialistic impulse that leads to favoritism. Whatever it is, ask the Holy Spirit to guard you enviously.

Read: James 4:11–12; Psalm 34:11–16

TODAY IN THE WORD



Although the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the free-

dom of speech, not all forms of expression are legally acceptable. Slander is one of the types of speech that the Supreme Court has ruled can be restricted. But this doesn't mean that the Court has made it easy to restrict slander. In order to win a slander case against someone (along with libel, which is slander in a printed form), you must be able to prove that the content of the statement was demonstrably false and that there was a malicious intent before the slander was spoken. Because of this burden of proof, very few slander cases actually are brought to court.

God's Word has a clearer restriction on slander for Christians: don't ever do it! In our passage today, James returns to a theme that has recurred throughout this book—the use of our tongues. There are many ways we can use our tongues for evil purposes, and one is to slander and condemn people.

James clarifies why our slander, particularly against other Christians, is problematic. When we speak evil of others, we are sitting in judgment over them. Our critical spirit is then assuming the place of God, who is the only one who has the right to judge others. Our slander is another outworking of our pride and favoritism, two sins

that we have already seen indicate that we are no longer walking according to God's desires but are following our own path.

We need to be reminded at this point of James's earlier instruction to be slow to speak (1:19). God is the one who is able to save or destroy (4:12). Here James is using the fear of the Lord to motivate us to act in a way that pleases Him. Our fear of God is more than just a pious reverence—it includes a trembling humility because we know He is able to judge us rightly. It is this fear that Proverbs repeatedly cites as “the beginning of wisdom” (9:10; see yesterday's study). When we realize that God will judge us rightly and with authority, we should be motivated to follow His ways and live to please Him.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Sins that we commit with our tongue can happen so quickly, often before we've realized it.

Pray today that the Lord would make you sensitive to and aware of the words that you speak about others. If you find yourself speaking slander, don't dismiss it as “just talk.” God declares that this is a serious sin that indicates we are trying to take the place of God. Follow the steps of repentance outlined yesterday, and ask for the Lord's help to guard your tongue.

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.

PSALM 34:13



TODAY AT MOODY

Join us in prayer for MBI President, Dr. Joseph Stowell, as today and tomorrow he greets the MBI Board of Trustees members at their annual meetings. Pray that the Holy Spirit would minister to every participant and His name would be glorified in every decision.

*Anyone, then,
who knows
the good he
ought to do
and doesn't
do it, sins.*

JAMES 4:17



TODAY AT MOODY

Moody Radio brings the truth of the Bible, encouragement, and edification to thousands of homes every day. Please join Bob Neff, Vice President of Broadcasting, in thanking God for granting Moody the privilege to invest in the lives of so many listeners.

Read: James 4:13–17

TODAY IN THE WORD



Throughout the 1990s, one of the best-selling business tools was the Franklin Covey Planner. Developed with Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, these planners were designed to help organize and structure the lives of busy people. Companies held seminars to teach their employees how to use the planners so they could supposedly become organized and therefore more productive. Frequent conversations among professional people included discussion of the size, color, and features of their personal Franklin Covey planners.

There's certainly nothing wrong with wanting to be organized. But today's passage warns us about the danger of thinking we can get our lives so put together that we're no longer open to what God may have in store for us.

Earlier, James challenged our pride by calling for a reversal of our values from the world (1:9–11). Instead of prizing wealth, we are instructed to value life in God. Now we return to themes of wealth and pride and find a more direct critique: we can often take pride in our success and make great boasts, not only about what we have done but even about what we think we will do (v. 13).

This rebuke is probably directed at rich believers, for those in business could relate to

these sentiments. It's also noteworthy that such boasting is a misuse of our tongues. There is no place for such pride and boasting in the Christian life (v. 16).

As Christians, we are to recognize that all we are and all we have is a result of God's grace to us. We ought to humbly go about our business knowing that God is ultimately in control. This is true wisdom. The final verse of this chapter reminds us that with our knowledge comes responsibility. Now that we know what God requires of us to live wisely, we will be sinning if we don't obey (v. 17). Thankfully, He never asks something of us without also making available the grace to accomplish it.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Do you attribute your success to your organizational skills, your work ethic, or your natural talents? These things are good, but not if we put our trust in them and take the credit ourselves for what we have accomplished.

Whether it's your work inside or outside the home or even in your church, dedicate your efforts to the Lord today. Purpose to give Him the honor and credit for what you accomplish. Thank Him for the talents and opportunities that He has given you.

Read: James 5:1–6; Luke 12:13–21

TODAY IN THE WORD



Compared to most of the rest of the world, Americans as a whole are

fabulously wealthy. Certainly poverty exists here, but even those considered “lower middle class” in the United States have more possessions and opportunities than those considered “wealthy” in most countries.

Our passage today is not speaking only to the “super-rich,” the billionaires of the world. Especially as Americans, we need to pay close attention to this word from God about how we view our financial resources.

James has made clear that how we view money and treat both the rich and poor is an integral part of living out our Christian life. We cannot ever think that this is an area off-limits to God. If we are to live wisely and receive God’s blessing, we must recognize that the wealth of this world is fleeting. The world says that it’s wise to put our confidence in wealth, and that we should do whatever it takes to acquire more. This way of living leads only to destruction—both of the material things and of our own souls.

Jesus told the parable of the rich fool to illustrate this same point (see Luke 12:13–21). This man’s neighbors must have looked at him and thought, “My, he’s certainly doing well. He just built another barn!” But the Lord knew his heart, and he was judged according to his own

desires, not what he had accumulated in possessions.

The key is to use our wealth wisely. We are to be just and fair to those who depend on us, whether employees or family members (v. 4). We are not to abuse our resources (v. 5). And we are not to hoard our money and possessions, but we are to be generous and willing to help others (v. 6).

Wealth can be used to glorify God when we, especially those of us who believe in Jesus, provide for the needy. Our use of wealth can condemn us when we use it as a source of pride or self-reliance. Conversely, it can express our genuine faith and love for God when we live wisely by using our wealth to help others (cf. 1:27; 2:16–17).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



It may be easy to read a passage like our text today and immediately think of how it should convict others. You may think, “I’m not a millionaire, and I don’t abuse my employees!”

God is concerned about our hearts, and the attitude of our hearts will be demonstrated through the use of our check-book. Even if you regularly give to support your church and other ministries, prayerfully consider today a special gift to the Lord’s work as a way to say that your heart is not clinging to your wealth (see Luke 21:1–4).

*Watch out!
... a man’s
life does not
consist in the
abundance
of his possessions.*

LUKE 12:15



TODAY AT MOODY

As we continue to keep Moody Radio in our prayers, please add the Stations Administration staff to your prayer list today and tomorrow. We appreciate the service of Michael Bingham, Robin Jones, Scott Keegan, Tobey Lubeck, and John Maddex.

You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

JAMES 5:8



TODAY AT MOODY

Please uphold in prayer again the staff of the Stations Administration department: Ronald Maxwell, Pamela McCain, Lloyd Rugen, and Teri Vaughn. May God's guiding hand continue to lead them on the road of Christian broadcasting.

Read: James 5:7-9; Matthew 24:45-51

TODAY IN THE WORD



A group of Christian high school students was asked when they would like Jesus to return, if they could choose. Most said something like, "After I get married," or "After I have children." A few said, "After I buy a sports car," or "After I go to college." Not one said, "As soon as possible! I want Jesus to return today!"

It's revealing that when Christians who live in places like the jungles of Papua New Guinea or Ecuador are asked that question, they frequently say, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus!" (see 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20). There's something about the experience of suffering that sharpens our awareness of and desire for Christ's return.

James wants all of us, whether rich or poor, to focus on the return of Christ. We should all be living in light of the end—Jesus will return to earth, and all of us must give an account. Living wisely means that we live our lives in the knowledge that Christ's return means both judgment and reward.

If we are focused on the return of Christ, what will our lives look like? James provides the answer. We will be patient, doing the right thing without giving up. If we keep watering and waiting, we will reap the harvest of righteousness (v. 7; cf. 3:18). Just as with a farmer, there are many elements beyond our control. But we continue to

have faith in God's Word, and that faith is expressed through our godly lives.

As before in James 4:12, we see a reminder of how judgment, and the resulting fear of the Lord, is used to motivate us to live wisely and patiently (v. 9). There's an important warning against the temptation to complain about other believers. How we treat those with whom we interact in the world is important, but God is very concerned with how we are treating each other in the church.

Throughout the book of James, we've seen exhortations against favoritism, envy, fighting, and grumbling in the body of Christ. These do not reflect the desires of God, and they will bring judgment.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Focusing on the return of Christ doesn't mean that we sit around twiddling our thumbs, while we gaze at the sky. It means that as we go about our daily lives, we live to please God because we know Christ could come at any moment.

If you have lost your focus on the return of Christ, make Revelation 22:20 your prayer today: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." If you find that for any reason you don't want Jesus to return just yet, see what it is that's blocking your focus and confess it to God today.

Read: James 5:10–11; Job 1:13–22; 42:10–17

TODAY IN THE WORD



Arizona Senator John McCain has inspired admiration of many because of

what he endured during the Vietnam War. Captured as prisoner of war, McCain was held in captivity in the infamous “Hanoi Hilton” for five years where he was routinely tortured or kept in solitary confinement. Yet he survived and returned to the United States still committed to serving his country.

Although McCain endured terrible suffering, the Bible is filled with stories of great saints who experienced far worse, and still maintained their commitment to serving God. In our passage today, James points to Job as an example of perseverance that has great significance for us today.

If you missed last month’s study in *Today in the Word* on the book of Job, it is well worth going back to. Here he is mentioned as one example of an Old Testament character who demonstrated how to live in the light of God’s promises. And the key promise that James has already highlighted for us is the return of Christ (v. 9).

Our patience and perseverance will bear fruit—God will do what He has promised. Christ will return, and we will receive judgment and reward. This certainty should encourage us to keep living wisely.

Wise living is walking by faith and not sight. We trust

God’s promises and act on His desires, even when the wisdom of the world urges us to get what we want here and now. The world says, “Take advantage of others to get more! Base your friendships on what others can do for you! Get all the stuff you can now!” God’s wisdom says, “Favoritism is a sin. Your wealth will rot. You must treat others generously.” Our goal as Christians is to shape our desires to conform to God’s desires, even when the world thinks we’re crazy.

Even if we suffer for walking according to God’s way, we know that God is full of mercy and compassion and He will not forsake us (v. 11).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Wealth and happiness are gifts from God, but they are not the only way that

He demonstrates His love for us. Sometimes He allows these things to be taken away and allows us to undergo suffering so that He can help us grow in wisdom (1:2–4).

If you have been going through sorrow and trials, ask the Lord to show His mercy and compassion toward you, and bring a result of wisdom and righteousness in your life. As with Job, after our sorrow we can testify to the love and care of our Lord in a wonderful way.

*We consider
blessed those
who have
persevered. . . .
The Lord
is full of
compassion
and mercy.*

JAMES 5:11



TODAY AT MOODY

Please keep in your prayers today our Risk Management employees: Barbarah Stuart and Osman Webb. Ask for God’s grace and wisdom as they go about their daily tasks ensuring that the investments our donors make in the ministries of Moody are protected and soundly applied.

*Simply let
your “Yes” be
“Yes,” and
your “No,”
“No”; any-
thing beyond
this comes
from the
evil one.*

MATTHEW 5:37



TODAY AT MOODY

Thank you for praying today for Robert Gunter, General Counsel at Moody. Our prayer is that the God of hope would grant him joy and peace by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Also please pray that the Lord would always be honored through the legal integrity of all Moody's endeavors.

Read: James 5:12; Matthew 5:33–37

TODAY IN THE WORD



A first-grader was reprimanded by his teacher for calling other children names on the playground. “But those aren’t bad words!” he protested. “Bad words are what Mommy says when she’s driving the car!”

Swearing seems far more prevalent than a few generations ago; now even in casual conversation it isn’t unusual to hear words that would have been unacceptable in the past. James addresses another use of our tongues that we should guard against: taking oaths and swearing.

What we today think of as using bad language or cursing could be considered part of the prohibition against taking an oath, because it is “foolish talk” that does not glorify God (v. 12; cf. Eph. 5:4). But the exhortation in our passage today is dealing with more than just using four-letter words. We might never need our mouths washed out with soap, and still be guilty of the kind of speech to which James refers.

Part of wisdom is knowing what to say yes and no to. As we have seen, Christians are to be peaceable and not double-minded. And so when we give our word about something, we don’t need additional oaths in order to bind us to what we have said (cf. Matt. 5:33–37). We shouldn’t try to squirm out of our obligations through manipu-

lating what we have said; swearing an oath doesn’t increase our obligation to be accountable to what we should do. Our word should stand alone.

Additionally, oaths are a form of boasting, a declaration of what we will and will not do in the future (cf. 4:13). This is yet another way that swearing and taking oaths do not conform to living wisely, which involves humbly submitting to God.

Christians should be people of good reputation, whose word can be trusted and who are not characterized by foolishness. Swearing, whether through bad words or taking oaths, has no place in the speech of believers.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



This would be a good day to go back through our study of the book of James this month and make a list of all the ways that we should and should not use our tongues. Clearly God is deeply concerned with our speech, because it reflects so much of where our heart is. As you review the list, pray that “your speech will be seasoned with salt” (Col. 4:6), not to impress others with how well-spoken you are, but to bring glory to God through the wise use of your tongue.

Read: James 5:13–18; 1 Kings 18:16–46

TODAY IN THE WORD



Elijah was one of the greatest prophets in the history of Israel.

In the course of his life, he prayed for a drought on the land and God answered. He prayed for the Lord to raise the son of a widow from the dead, and God answered (1 Kings 17:22). He prayed for God to send fire from heaven, and God answered (18:38). He prayed for God to judge the wicked, and God answered (2 Kings 1:1–17). And then we read in James, “Elijah was a man just like us” (v. 17)!

Understandably, we might think that James is exaggerating here. Could we really pray to alter the forces of nature—and have God answer? By citing Elijah in our passage today, James is providing us insight into what a powerful prayer life looks like. It’s not simply believing in our minds very, very strongly that God will do something. Our prayer life is tied to how we are living.

We know from the story of Elijah that indeed he was not superhuman. He got tired, hungry, irritable, and even depressed, just as we do (see 1 Kings 19). But Elijah had two characteristics that consistently emerge: first, he had a certainty about who God was; and second, he obeyed the commands of God. Elijah almost always prefaces his pronouncements and his prayers with, “As the Lord Almighty lives,” (17:1;

18:15). And he went where God told him to go and said what God told him to say.

James is describing very practical ways that we can minister to each other, by prayer for each other when we need healing or forgiveness (vv. 14–16). But the key behind our prayers is that we are righteous. Righteousness is a gift of grace, and as we have seen over and over again in this book, is reflected in wise living. Our prayers for each other will be powerful when we know who God is and obey what He says. We can pray effectively when we are living in a way that pleases God and follow His desires.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



If you have extra time this weekend, read the whole story of Elijah in

1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2. As you read, jot down the examples of his obedience and the ways that God answered his prayers.

We can have a powerful ministry of blessing others through our prayers. But first, we must be living in a way that glorifies God. Our decision to serve God affects more than just our own lives—it also has significant implications for our ability to serve others.

*As the Lord,
the God of
Israel, lives,
whom I serve,
there will be
neither dew
nor rain in
the next few
years except
at my word.*

1 KINGS 17:1



TODAY AT MOODY

Today, please remember before the Lord in prayer the ministry of WMBV, Moody Radio station in Dixons Mills, Alabama, and its staff—Rob Moore and John Rogers. Also include in your prayers its repeater station—WMBU—in Forest, Mississippi.

*We know that
we have come
to know him
if we obey his
commands.*

1 JOHN 2:3



TODAY AT MOODY

In conclusion of our devotional study this month, let's thank the Lord together for giving us His Word, for the gift of faith—"the evidence of things not seen"—and for instilling in us the desire and the ability to obey Him and to do His will.

Read: James 5:19–20

TODAY IN THE WORD



We have reached the final exhortation in the book of James, and unlike many other letters in the New Testament, he doesn't conclude with a list of personal greetings. Instead, he ends the letter more like a sermon, with a last command about how we should treat each other in the body of Christ.

Throughout the letter, James has stressed that we cannot claim to know God if our actions aren't consistent with our profession of faith. Truth for James is far more than a list of correct principles to know in our heads—it must include correct behavior as well. When we read that a brother or sister has strayed from the truth, then we know that James is referring to how they are living, not just doctrinal purity (v. 19).

We don't live the Christian life in isolation from one another, unconcerned about how anyone else is doing. James has already told us to resist favoritism and fighting in the church, and to practice generosity and compassion. Now he instructs us to help each other live wisely.

The stakes for restoring each other to righteousness are high, for if believers continue to follow their own desires, it's doubtful that they possessed the spirit of God—they will be on the path that leads to death (v. 20). Additionally, James implies that

our efforts to help others remain faithful will bring blessing to us, because we have followed the desire of God to restore a brother (cf. 1 Tim. 4:16).

James does not propound a "social gospel" where our sole concern is for the material needs of others. Meeting those needs is important (cf. 2:16–17), but we are also to be concerned about the spiritual needs of others (5:13–20). In fact, for James these two elements are inseparable—if we are concerned with practicing the generosity and compassion that reflects God's desires, both physical and spiritual needs will be a priority. This will be the outworking of our desire to live wisely with true faith that pleases God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



After going through the book of James, we cannot say that we don't know what God expects of us.

May our prayer be to follow the desires of God, forsaking the sin that so easily entangles us (Heb. 12:1), and pursuing a life of obedience and wisdom. In all of this, our motivation is remembering who God is and expecting the return of our Lord. As believers, may we walk in truth so that we will bring glory to the name of Christ.

to investigate agencies and fields of service, and to refocus their hearts and minds," explained Clark, "For students going into other areas of ministry, the missions conference is an opportunity to learn more about what God is doing around the world, so that they can effectively support missions both now and in their home churches after they leave Moody."

The student missions conference is just one way the Missions Department prepares students for a lifetime of service. The department offers specialized majors including Teaching English as a Second Language, Applied Linguistics, Jewish Studies, Urban Ministry, Evangelism/Discipleship, and International Ministry. During their classes, students learn principles of effective cross-cultural ministry and evangelism, the biblical basis for missions, features of major

world religions, and, depending on their specific focus, specialized skills that will enable them to be maximally effective in their ministry. Students are also required to participate in a six to eight week summer cross-cultural internship, which provides an incredibly valuable "real-world" experience.

"I love everything about teaching at Moody—but what is most rewarding is developing relationships with the students," said Clark. "They are such a unique and special group—fully committed to following Christ, eager to learn, and passionate about sharing the gospel. I develop close relationships with the Applied Linguistics majors, and the sadness of watching them graduate each year is eased by the knowledge that they are heading off to serve the Lord wherever He leads them." ■

Moody Trusts & Estate Planning Seminars

Even if you already have a will or estate plan, there may be a better plan for you.

Attend a **MOODY TRUSTS & ESTATE PLANNING SEMINAR** and find out if you have the best plan available. This presentation is loaded with practical information with plenty of time for your questions. The seminars are **FREE** and you are under *no obligation* if you attend.

Chicago Area Estate Planning Seminars

OCTOBER 18, 2004

Holiday Inn Convention Center
6161 West Grand Ave.
Gurnee, IL 60031
7-9 p.m.

OCTOBER 19, 2004

Sheraton Northwest Chicago
3400 W. Euclid Ave.
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
7-9 p.m.

OCTOBER 20, 2004

Holiday Inn
150 South Gary Ave.
Carol Stream, IL 60188
10 a.m.—Noon

OCTOBER 21, 2004

Holiday Inn
7800 Kingery Hwy.
Willowbrook, IL 60527
7-9 p.m.

OCTOBER 22, 2004

Holiday Inn
2323 Willow Creek Rd.
Portage, IN 46368
7-9 p.m.

OCTOBER 23, 2004

Moody Bible Institute
Sweeting Center
820 N. LaSalle Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60610
10 a.m.—Noon

*To register for a free seminar, please call **800.801.2171***

Do You Need More Income?



The continuing low interest rates have a positive effect on some parts of the economy, but not for people on a fixed income. If you depend on fixed income investments for a part of your income, these low interest rates are a problem. A possible alternative to fixed income investments is establishing a **Moody Gift Annuity**.

MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE has issued charitable gift annuities for 97 years. A Moody Gift Annuity provides you with a stable, lifetime income at an attractive annuity rate based on your age. You also benefit from an income tax deduction, if you itemize deductions, and a part of the income is tax-free for your life expectancy. The best part is the satisfaction of knowing your gift to Moody will help continue preparing young men and women to serve Christ throughout the world.

You can get more information about the Moody Gift Annuity from the informative brochure, *A Giving Partnership*. This **FREE** information is available by simply checking the box on the attached reader reply panel, or call us at 1-800-DL MOODY (356-6639) and ask for *A Giving Partnership*.



MOODY STEWARDSHIP • A Ministry of Moody Bible Institute