

JAMES

1:1

Who is James?

James is the half-brother of Jesus (CP Mt 13:55). James did not believe Jesus was Messiah during Jesus' lifetime. He thought Jesus was just a religious fanatic (CP Jn 7:2-5 with Mk 3:20-21, 31-35). *Friends* in Mk 3:21 (KJV), means family, which we see in V 31-35 are Jesus' mother and brothers. It was not until James saw Jesus after His resurrection that he believed on Him (CP 1Cor 15:3-7). After Jesus ascended to heaven, James waited with those assembled in the upper room, together with Mary and Christ's other brothers, for the coming of the Holy Spirit (CP Ac 1:13-14). James later became one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem (CP Ac 15:13-22; Ga 1:18-19; 2:9, 11-12). See also comments on Mt 12:46-47, Mk 3:20-21, Jude 1:1.

1:2-4

How can believers be expected to rejoice in sufferings?

Divers temptations (KJV), are trials - testing situations in life which include persecutions, afflictions and hardship which believers must undergo that challenges their faith. Many Christians believe that these trials are sent by God to test their faith, but that is not correct (CP V 13-17). Trials are sent by Satan, not to test believers' faith, but to destroy it, if it were possible (CP 2 Cor 2:11; Eph 6:11-18; 1 Pe 5:8-9). Believers are warned throughout scripture that they will suffer persecutions, afflictions and hardships as a norm of christianity (CP Mt 10:38; Mk 10:29-30; Jn 15:18-21; Ac 14:22; Ro 8:17; Php 1:29; 1 Th 3:1-5; 2 Ti 2:11-12; 3:10-12; 1 Pe 2:19-23; 3:14-17; 1 Jn 3:13). To *count it all joy* while undergoing trials means that believers have to look beyond the pain of their prevailing circumstances to the future reward that awaits them in heaven (CP Jas 1:12; 2:5 with Mt 5:10-12; 2 Cor 4:17-18; 1 Pe 1:6-7; 4:12-19). Trials have to be endured to teach patience, and to lead to maturity. The believer's faith can only reach full maturity when it has been tried and proved (CP Ro 5:3-4; Jas 5:10-11; 1 Pe 5:10). See also comments on Ro 5:3-5, 1 Pe 4:17, 5:8-11.

1:5-8

Why is wisdom required here?

Believers are exhorted here to pray for divine wisdom that will enable them to withstand the trials of V 2-4 (CP V 2-4 with Pr 2:6; Jas 3:13, 17). God gives this wisdom liberally without finding fault to all who ask for it in faith, doubting nothing (CP Mt 21:22; Mk 11:22-24; 1Jn 5:14-15). A *double minded man* is one who wavers all the time between faith and doubt. He is as unsettled as the restless waves, being uncertain and undecided about anything pertaining to God. He is unstable and God will not help him.

1:9-11

How can the rich rejoice by being humiliated?

Being made low, which means having to undergo spiritual abasement or humiliation, leads the rich to perceive and lament their moral guilt. The same grace that exalts the lowly humbles the rich. Both are cause for rejoicing. The rich can rejoice in new values because they realize that earthly riches are only temporary as opposed to the eternal benefits of the

true riches of God's grace (CP Jer 9:23-24 with He 10:34). The rich no longer see themselves as being rich, but merely stewards of that which is God's (CP 1Chr 29:10-16; Ro 11:36). The rich who cannot be made low will be destroyed. *Fade away* in Jas 1:11 refers to the certain destruction of those who are rich only in temporal things (CP Job 15:29-31; 20:28; 27:16-17; Psa 49:1-20 with Lu 6:20-25; 1Ti 6:9-10; Rev 3:15-18). See also comments on Mt 6:24, 19:23-26, Lu 12:16-21, 12:33-34, 16:19-31, 1Cor 10:14-22, 2Cor 12:14, 1Ti 6:6-10.

1:12

What is the crown of life referred to here?

The crown of life here is also called a crown of righteousness, and a crown of glory, elsewhere in scripture (CP Rev 2:10 with 2Ti 4:8 and 1Pe 5:4). These are not three different crowns as so many Christians believe, but three facets of the same thing. The word *crown* here is used figuratively as a symbol of the reward of eternal life (CP 1 Cor 9:25; Rev 3:11). See also comments on 2 Ti 4:6-8.

1:13-15

What do we learn from what James says here?

We learn from this that God does not tempt or test anyone. He does not will ill to people to make them fall. Temptation is the arousal of man's own evil thoughts and desires which lead him to become trapped in sin when he succumbs to them (CP 2Sam 11:1-27). Notice the progression of events that led to David's sin here - it is the same as Jas 1:13-15 teaches. David became trapped in sin by succumbing to his own evil thoughts and desires. He was drawn away of his own lust and enticed, which led to adultery, murder, and then a cover-up. No-one can blame God when they are tempted, because the temptations originate in their own hearts (CP Pr 4:23; Jer 17:9; Mk 7:21-23). Believers only deceive themselves if they think that it is God testing them. Every sin we commit originates with us - only good things come from God (CP Jas 1:16-17). See also comments on Ro 6:12-14.

1:19-21

What does it mean here to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath?

James is admonishing Christians here to always be eager to listen to Godly teaching and counsel but at the same time to be guarded in their own conversation and not speak hastily or foolishly. They must carefully consider what they are going to say before taking part in any conversation (CP Pr 10:19; 13:3; 17:27-28; Ecc 5:1-3; Mt 5:37; Jas 5:12). *Slow to wrath* means that Christians are not to lose their temper and sin in anger (CP Pr 14:17; 16:32; Ecc 7:9; 1Cor 13:4-5; Eph 4:26). Christians are to put aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness in order to receive the engrafted, or implanted, word of God with meekness. *Filthiness* here means moral vices, while *naughtiness* means wickedness of heart, life, and character. The believer's new life in Christ demands that they get rid of all moral filth and wickedness which prevents God's

word implanting itself in their spirit (CP Eph 5:4-8; Col 3:1-10). See also comments Eph 4:26, 5:5-13.

1:22-25 To whom is this teaching directed?

This is directed to everyone in the church who professes faith in Christ and His blood atonement, believing that is all that is necessary for salvation. V 22 clearly refutes that thinking. Whoever thinks that is deceiving themselves. Merely hearing God's word will not get one to heaven; it must be acted upon - only doers of the word will be saved (CP Psa 119:9; Pr 4:4; Mt 7:21-27 (also Lu 6:46-49) 12:30, 46-50; Ro 2:13; Jas 2:14-26; Rev 1:3). Jesus makes it very clear in Mt 12:30 that there is no neutrality in Christianity. If believers are not actively involved in doing the work of the word for Christ, then they are actively involved in doing the work of the devil in opposition to Him. Many Christians do not properly understand that what Jesus teaches here applies to every professing Christians who is not doing the work of God's word. It does not apply to those outside the church but to those inside the church who profess to love Christ but do not obey His commandments. They will forfeit their salvation. We cannot play down this meaning because, apart from the preceding scriptures, that is what is taught throughout the New Testament (CP also Mt 19:17; Jn 14:15, 21; 15:5-10; Ro 2:7-11; 1 Cor 7:19; Ga 6:7-8; 1 Jn 2:3-5; 3:22-24; 2 Jn 6; Rev 22:14). Jas 1:24 teaches that those who merely hear God's word quickly forget it, like the man who looks at himself in the mirror and then walks away and soon forgets what he looked like. Only those who hear the word and do it are blessed of God. This blessing does not refer to temporal prosperity but future approval, when the kingdom of God is established on earth (CP Psa 1:1-3; Mt 5:3-9; Jas 1:12; 2:5 with Jas 5:7-11). See also comments on Jas 5:14-16.

The law of liberty in Jas 1:25 is so-called because believers have been freed from sin's bondage, and desire to do the will of God (CP Jn 8:34-36 with Psa 119:45). The law of liberty must never be seen as a licence to sin but rather, as the freedom and power to obey Christ's commands (CP Jas 2:10-12).

1:26-27 What is James saying here?

James is saying here that anyone who says they are Christians, but do not exercise control over their tongues are just fooling themselves, and their religion is worthless (CP Psa 39:1; Pr 13:2-3; 21:23; Mt 12:36-37; Jas 1:19; 3:2-13; 1Pe 3:10). Every person is judged by their words because they reveal the state of their heart. What God considers to be pure and genuine religion is that believers take care of orphans and widows in need, and to keep themselves from being corrupted by the evil world system (CP De 24:17-22; 1Ti 5:3 with Jas 4:4; 1Jn 2:15).

2:1-5 What do we learn from this?

James is warning the church here against giving preferential treatment to a wealthy man over a poor man in the assembly. But this functions as a general

condemnation of any discriminatory behaviour by Christians, in any situation. Any discrimination is incompatible with the faith of Christ, which excludes partiality in any form (CP V1 with De 10:17; Pr 28:21; Ac 10:34-35; Ro 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; 1Pe 1:17). If Christians favour one person over another on the basis of appearance, wealth or social status, they are acting from evil motives and contravene the law of love. They are in sin, for we are all one in Christ (CP Jas 2:4, 8-9 with Lev 19:18; Mt 19:16, 19; 22:36-40; Jn 13:34-35; 15:12; Ro 13:8-10; Ga 5:13-14; Eph 5:1-2; 1Jn 3:11, 18 with Ga 3:28). Christians cannot love their neighbours as themselves and show partiality, because the two are mutually exclusive. The law of love is the basis for all the laws of how Christians should relate to each other (CP 1Cor 13:1-8; 1Jn 3:14-16).

2:10-12 What does it mean that if we break one of God's commands we are guilty of breaking them all?

This does not mean as many think, that it is just as bad no matter what commandment one breaks. Rather, it means that one sin is enough to damn the soul (CP De 27:26; Mt 5:19). In Jas 2:12 Christians are admonished to order their behaviour in light of judgement by the law of liberty (CP Jas 1:25 with Ro 2:16). Those who show no mercy will receive none (CP Jas 2:13 with Job 22:6-9; Pr 21:13; Mt 5:7; 18:23-35; Lu 6:36-37; Eph 4:31-32).

2:14-26 Does this not contradict Paul's teaching that we are justified by faith alone and not by works?

No (CP Ro 3:20, 27-28; 4:1-25; Eph 2:8-9). Paul is referring to initial justifying faith in these scriptures, whereas James is referring to the faith we demonstrate by our works after salvation. Christianity demands works of believers (CP Mt 5:14-16; 16:27; Eph 2:10; 1Ti 6:17-19; 2Ti 3:16-17; Tit 1:15-16; 2:6-7, 11-14). Christians are not justified by works, but because we are justified by faith, we do the works. This proves our Christian consecration to God's service. There is no contradiction whatever in Paul's and James' teaching. James simply teaches that merely believing in God is no proof that we are justified by faith (CP Jas 2:19). Even demons believe in God, but they are not justified by faith and going to heaven. Every act of obedience to God's word is an act of faith and works combined to maintain our justification before God. Our works are acts of faith, meaning that they spring from faith or are combined with faith. Faith and works cannot be separated. The works we do flow from our faith (CP Tit 3:8; Jas 2:21-25 with He11:17-19).

Abraham demonstrated his faith by his works. He believed God and he acted on that belief, and proved his faith. Had he not obeyed God it would have demonstrated that he had no faith in God or His word (CP Gen 22:1-18). Abraham's faith was made perfect in God's sight by his works - being prepared to sacrifice Isaac as an act of obedience to God. God expects the same of everyone of us who say we believe in Him and His word. If we do not act out

what we say we believe then we are in fact repudiating God's word (CP Jas 1:22-25). This teaching, together with Jas 2:14-26, is directed to those in the church who profess faith in Christ and His blood atonement believing that is all that is necessary for salvation. This study clearly highlights the error in that thinking. James teaches that faith such as that is dead and it will produce neither salvation nor anything else that is good (CP Jas 2:14). The answer to the question here of course, is no. The only faith that saves is that which is demonstrated by works, as Jas 1:22 teaches.

This is a very important teaching for the church and carries with it a grim warning we must all heed. It is futile proclaiming faith if our actions mirror unbelief. We are only deluding ourselves if we believe we please God yet are not walking in faith and trusting implicitly in His word (CP Ro 14:23; He 3:12, 19; 4:1-2, 11; 11:6). See also comments on Ro 3:24-26 (A), 4:3, Eph 2:8-10, He 11:1, Jas 1:22-25.

2:25 Who was Rahab the harlot and what did she do?

(CP Josh 2:1-21; 6:17, 22-25 with He 11:31). Rahab was saved by faith and works combined. She proved her faith by her works. Faith alone would not have saved her, but when faith led to action, she was declared righteous. What James and the writer of Hebrews says about Rahab is not to be construed as a commendation of her occupation or her lie. It is simply a commendation of the outworking of her faith, which enabled the spies to escape, and God's purpose to be fulfilled. Rahab obviously stopped being a harlot and lying, which contravene God's law, because she is now in heaven with all the other faith worthies of He 11 (CP He 11:1-40).

3:1-2 How are we to understand what James says here?

This is a grim warning to Christians aspiring to be teachers in the New Testament church. *Masters* (KJV), means teachers, but it also includes every leader in the church, because they are all instructors in God's word – they all give instruction to a congregation – and no one has a more solemn responsibility in the church than those who teach the sacred scriptures. James warns Christians here not to aspire too hastily to be a teacher, because they increase their liability for judgement if they do. This is not meant to discourage true teachers, but to draw to the attention of prospective teachers the seriousness of the teaching ministry (CP Jas 3:3-12). The warning about unbridled tongues here is primarily directed to teachers, and secondarily to all Christians. It is very easy for teachers to sin with their tongue. They have a tremendous influence over the people they teach, and they must give very careful consideration to not only what they say, but how they say it. The teaching ministry is one of great responsibility, and must therefore be entered into with extreme caution.

In V3-12 James highlights the nature of the tongue. He compares the damage the tongue can do to a raging fire which originates in hell. Horses are large animals, yet they can be controlled by a tiny bit in their mouth.

Great ships can be steered by small rudders. All kinds of animals, reptiles and fish have been tamed, but no man can tame the tongue. It is the smallest member of the body, but is full of wickedness, and unless it is controlled it will defile the body (CP Psa 34:13; 39:1; Pr 17:20; 26:28; 28:23; Mt 12:36-37; Eph 4:29, 31; 5:3-4; Col 3:8-9; Tit 3:1-2; Jas 4:11; 1Pe 3:8-10). The activity of the tongue is hypocritically inconsistent. It is used to bless God, and also to curse people made in God's image (CP Psa 62:4). Because of the tendency to sin with the tongue Christians must monitor every word they speak, avoiding criticism, slander, backbiting and gossip. They must be swift to hear and slow to speak, taking every thought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ Jesus (CP Pr 10:18-21; Ecc 5:1-7; Jas 1:19 with 2Cor 10:3-5; 13:10; Ga 5:22-23; Jas 3:13; 1Pe 3:10). Jas 3:13 teaches that wise and understanding Christians give practical proof of their wisdom by their conduct and the humility with which they perform good deeds. But no Christians who harbours bitter jealousy in their heart, or are filled with self-seeking ambition, are inspired by God. Rather, they are inspired by the devil, for where there is bitter jealousy and self-seeking ambition so too there is confusion and all sorts of evil and vile practices. Christians must never allow themselves to yield to evil desires and destructive competitiveness. If we always seek God's wisdom, we will be set free from the need to compare ourselves with others, and want what they have (CP V14-16; Pr 14:30; Ro 12:3; 13:13; Ga 5:26; Php 2:3; 1Pe 2:1-3).

3:17-18 How is wisdom from above defined?

First and foremost it is pure and gentle, peace loving and courteous. It allows discussion, and is willing to yield to others. It is full of compassion, and produces a harvest of good deeds. It is also free from prejudice and hypocrisy. All Christians have to do to receive of this wisdom is to ask for it. God will give it to all who ask in faith (CP Jas 1:5-8 with Pr 2:1-11). See also comments on Jas 1:5-8.

4:1-4 Are these believers or unbelievers James is addressing here?

These are believers - Jewish believers who were scattered throughout the region because of persecution (CP 1:1 with Ac 8:1). James calls them *brethren*, and *beloved brethren* (CP Jas 1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1-10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9-10, 12, 19). Many in the church think that James is writing to unbelievers in 4:1-4, but to suggest that is to rob the passage of its teaching value for the church. The sad fact is that there are wars and fights among believers when they no longer love and serve one another, but are driven by the desire for more, and jealousy of others. The word *kill* in V3 (KJV), means *murder*. It is used figuratively of the anger, jealousy and rivalry believers caught up in evil desires exhibit toward each other (CP Jas 3:14-16 with Ga 5:13-15). Ga 5:13-15 is a graphic picture of what happens when believers do not love and serve each other. The term *adulterers and adulteresses* in Jas 4:4 (KJV), is used metaphorically of believers who are spiritually unfaithful to Christ and have become

friends of the world (CP Jer 3:20; Ro 8:7-8; 1Jn 2:15-17).

The world in the context of Jas 4:4 and 1Jn 2:15-17 designates all that is hostile, rebellious, and opposed to God (CP Jn 7:7; 15:18-25; 17:14; 1Cor 1:20-21). The affairs of the world and the affairs of God are diametrically opposed to each other, and believers cannot be a part of the corrupt world system and please God (CP Ro 12:1-2; Jas 1:27). Friendship with the world means embracing its values, interest and pleasures, all of which God hates (CP Lu 16:13-15). Neither can believers have close or intimate fellowship with anyone who participates in the corrupt world system (CP 2Cor 6:14-18). This world is only temporary. It is destined to be destroyed by God and even now it is passing away (CP Isa 13:1-11; Dan 2:34-35, 44; 1Cor 7:31; 2Pe 3:10-13 with 1Jn 2:17). See also comments on Lu 16:14-15; Jn 15:18-25; Ga 6:14; 2Pe 3:1-7; 1Jn 2:15-17.

4:5 What scripture is James quoting here and what does it mean?

James is not quoting a specific passage of scripture here; he is summarising general Old Testament teaching. Opinions vary among bible commentators as to the meaning of this verse, but it is not difficult to interpret if kept in context. Many in the church believe that the spirit referred to is the Holy Spirit, but that is not correct; the Holy Spirit does not lust to envy – as the KJV puts it – or is filled with envious desires. In this context James is referring to man's own spirit, and what he is simply saying in V 5 is that the scriptures foresaw the anger, jealousy and rivalry believers caught up in evil desires would exhibit toward each other (CP V1-4). The natural tendency of man's spirit is to hate God and his neighbour, and to desire the sinful pleasures of the world (CP Gen 6:5; 8:21; Pr 21:10; Ecc 9:3; Jer 17:9; Mk 7:21-23). See also comments on Jas 4:1-4.

However, notwithstanding the natural tendency of man's spirit to hate God and his neighbour, and to desire the sinful pleasures of the world, God gives more grace in order to overcome their sins, to all who return to Him in true humility (CP Pr 3:34; Zech 1:3; Jas 4:6 with He 4:16). See also comments on Ro 5:15.

4:7-10 What do we learn from what James says here?

What we learn from this first and foremost is that in order to stand against the devil, believers must be totally surrendered to God in true humility. The devil will not flee from us otherwise (CP Psa 34:18; Isa 57:15-18; Zech 1:3 with Eph 6:10-18 and 1Pe 5:8-9). *Double-minded* in Jas 4:8 refers to believers whose minds are on both the things of God and worldly pursuits. They are spiritually unfaithful to Christ and friends of the world (CP Jer 3:20; Ro 8:7-8; Jas 1:8; 4:4; 1Jn 2:15-16).

4:11-12 What does it mean to speak evil of another?

To speak evil of another person can mean to speak falsely about them, but it also means unloving criticism or negative statements, which may be true or false (CP Ja 5:9). A believer who speaks evil of another believer sets aside God's law of love (CP Jn 13:34-35; 1Cor 13:4-7; Tit 1:15). This is not teaching that a believer cannot confront another believer who is sinning (CP Mt 18:15; 1Cor 4:14; Ga 6:1; Tit 2:11-15). But believers cannot make careless, derogatory, critical, slanderous accusations against other believers (CP Ex 23:1; Lev 19:16; Psa 50:19-20; 101:5; 140:11; Pr 10:18; 11:9; 16:28; 17:9; 26:20; Eph 4:31; 1Ti 3:11; Tit 2:3; 3:2; Jas 4:11). When we speak evil of another believer we set ourselves up as their judge and condemn them (CP Ro 14:4; Jas 2:4). Whoever judges another believer puts themselves above God and is in grave danger of losing their salvation (CP Isa 33:22; Mt 7:1-5). Only Jesus has the authority to judge and every believer is accountable to Him alone.

4:13-16 What do we learn from what James says here?

We learn from this that it is wrong to plan as if tomorrow is certain. V14 stresses the transitory nature of life (CP Pr 27:1 with Job 7:6-9; 9:25-26; 14:1-2, 5; Psa 39:5-6, 11; 89:47; 90:5-6; 102:3). In planning for the future believers must always consider God and His will (CP Pr 16:1, 9; 19:21). Believers should follow the example Paul set (CP Ac 18:21; Ro 1:10; 15:32; 1Cor 4:19; 16:7). This is not condemning wise business planning, but rather making plans as though God does not exist (CP Lu 12:16-19). The rich fool here thought he was master of his own destiny. He had his future all planned and God was no part of it; He gave no consideration at all to God and His will. James warns believers that anyone who leaves God and His will out of their plans for the future is in sin (CP Jas 4:17 with Lu 12:47-48; Jn 9:41).

5:1-6 Are the rich James addresses here believers as some think?

No, these are the wicked rich James referred to in Ch 2 who oppressed poor believers and defrauded them (CP 2:5-7 with Lev 19:13; De 24:14-15; Pr 11:28). In Jas 5:1-6 James is warning the wicked rich of the punishment that is awaiting them on judgement day. The corrupted wealth which they have accumulated at the expense of the poor will witness against them when they are judged. It will eat their flesh like fire, which implies that it will send them to hell (CP Lu 6:24-25; 16:19-31; 1Ti 6:9-10). To emphasize the impending doom of the wicked rich, James charges them with condemning and murdering innocent Christians who were powerless to resist them. *Killed* in Jas 5:6 means murdered, killed unjustly (CP 5:6 with Mt 5:21; 19:18; Mk 10:19; Jas 2:11; 4:2).

5:7-8 What do we learn from what James says here?

What James says here is linked by the word "therefore" to what he said against the wicked rich in V1-6 (CP V1-6). In V7-8 James exhorts believers

who are being persecuted by the wicked rich to remain steadfast under provocation and patiently await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as the farmer has to patiently wait for rains to ripen his crop, so too Christians have to patiently await the coming of the Lord. *The coming of the Lord* here refers to the time when Christ comes again to take all the saints of God - both living and dead - back to heaven with Him at the first resurrection, which signifies the end of the church age (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; Php 3:20-21; 1Th 4:13-18; 2Th 2:1, 7).

Many in the church believe that the "early rain" (at seed time), and the "latter rain" (at harvest time), are used in Jas 5:7 to picture the fruit of the harvest of souls. They hold to the view that the early rain depicts the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the church age on the Day of Pentecost, and that the latter rain depicts the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the end of the church age when the complete harvest of the church age will be gathered (CP De 11:14; Jer 5:24; Hos 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zech 10:1 with Ac 2:1-8, 12-21 (Joel 2:28-32)). There is no evidence to suggest that James had any of these scriptures in mind in Jas 5:7. He was simply exhorting Christians to remain steadfast under provocation, considering that Christ's coming again is imminent, and he then goes on and uses the Old Testament prophets and Job as examples of steadfastness despite their afflictions (CP V8-11).

Job is portrayed in the Old Testament as an immensely wealthy man of upright character who truly loved God. Yet God permitted Satan to test him (CP Job 1:1-12). Job lost everything he owned, even his children and his health, but he never stopped trusting in God, and even though he did not understand why these things were happening to him he remained true to God. His steadfastness and patience enabled God's purpose to prevail over Satan (CP 1:13 - 42:17). Job and the Old Testament prophets are the example believers must follow when they too are undergoing trials of their faith (CP Jas 1:2-4, 1Pe 1:6-9; 4:12-17). We should note here in closing that Job was a grandson of Jacob (CP Gen 46:1-13).

5:9 *See comments on 4:11-12*

5:12 *Does this mean that Christians cannot take an oath and swear to tell the truth even in a court of law?*

Yes (CP Mt 5:33-37). Christians should not have to

take an oath to attest to their truthfulness anywhere. The Christian demand is for absolute faithfulness and truthfulness in all speech, and Christians must never play word games, exaggerate, or speak anything other than the absolute truth at all times. For Christians not to observe this demand will bring God's condemnation upon them (CP Mt 12:36-37). See also comments on Mt 12:36-37.

5:14-16 *Whose faith is responsible for healing here?*

It is the elder's faith that is responsible for the sick being healed here; there can be no blame attached to the sick for their lack of faith if the sickness continues.

They exercise their faith by calling for the elders to pray over them in the first place. If anyone is to blame, it is the elders who prayed for them. However, if the elders and the sick both comply with the divine order for healing outlined here, healing is assured. That means that the sick have to call for the elders, not the elders call for the sick, as usually happens.

The elders in this context are the leaders of the New Testament church (CP Ac 20:17-21, 28; 1Ti 5:17; 1Pe 5:1-3). This is not teaching that only the leaders of the church are authorized to pray for healing; every believer in Christ has that authority (CP Mk 16:15-18; Jn 14:12-14; 15:7; 16:23-24). Every believer can expect God to respond affirmatively to their prayers if they pray in faith like Elijah the prophet did in the Old Testament. He closed the heavens so that no rain fell for three and a half years (CP Jas 5:17 with 1 Ki 17:1). Elijah, by faith, spoke it into being and Jesus promised believers that they could do the same (CP Mk 11:22-24).

5:19-20 *What do we learn from this?*

We learn from this that backsliders - believers who err from the truth and fall into sin - can be restored to fellowship with God when they confess and repent of their sins (CP Hos 14:4; Mk 3:28-29; Lu 22:31-32; 1Jn 1:7, 9; 5:16). *Shall hide a multitude of sins* in the context of Jas 5:20 (KJV), means that when a backslider has confessed and repented and is converted again to Christ, their sins are forgiven, or overlooked. They are in effect covered by the sacrificial blood of Jesus (CP Psa 32:1; 85:2; 103:10-13; Ro 4:7). The sinner referred to in Jas 5:20 is the "soul saved from death." It is not the one who converts him, as some in the church believe.