

## A STUDY OF JAMES—PRACTICAL LIVING

### LESSON 2

#### SPIRITUAL MATURITY

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Romans 8:28-29, NKJV)

“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

(1 Corinthians 13:11, NKJV)

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:1-2, NKJV)

“So, we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”

(2 Corinthians 5:16-17, NLT)

Rather than evolving within the society in which we live, we are to be **TRANSFORMED** by the **RENEWING** of our minds. This is the work of the

Holy Spirit which is known as SANCTIFICATION! Having been born again, REGENERATION, we are to be different. We must GROW UP in the faith.

### **A. PICTURES OF HUMILITY (trials)**

1. Lowly Brother—probably poor by definition—the poor believer is to glory (count it all joy) in the fact that God has exalted him, in allowing him to experience difficult circumstances for through such, his character and faith will be perfected.

2. Rich Believer—can also glory for when a trial brings him low (humbles him), it teaches him that life is short. Secondly, the lesson learned is that his pursuits or business interests will fade away. The rich person should always trust the Lord, not himself or herself, nor their money.

### **B. TESTING AND TEMPTATION**

1. The believer who ENDURES trials demonstrates that he or she loves Jesus, and therefore will receive the crown of life.

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10, NKJV)

“Therefore, we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of

Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

(2 Corinthians 5:9-10, NKJV)

*appear*—means to make visible or to make known—giving an account

2. Desiring to be with Christ produces the ambition to please Him. We aim to please the Lord not only because we know we will be with Him, but also because He will evaluate our work—whether good or bad—and reward us accordingly.

*receive*—means to receive back or to get an equivalent, or to get one’s due. The believer will be either approved or ashamed (salvation is secure—this is about rewards).

“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned,

he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”  
(1 Corinthians 3:9-15, NKJV)

### GOD WILL TEST US BUT DOES NOT TEMPT US!

“Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then He said, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” (Genesis 22:1-2, NKJV)

Enticement to sin does not come from God. God will never lead a person to commit sin for that is against His very nature and character. Remember that GOD HATES SIN! What He will do is place us in adverse circumstances for the purpose of building godly character (testing).

*drawn away/enticed*—the intensity with which desire lures a person until he or she is tragically entrapped. Sin does NOT force itself on the unwilling, but is chosen because of its attractions.

*conceived*—this suggests the image of a person’s will bending toward and finally seizing evil (playing with fire). This is the picture of an addict headed toward tragedy. Once these forces acquire us, they then control us—strongholds are set up; fortresses are set up within our hearts of a negative variety.

*full grown*—this suggests bringing a goal to completion. The idea is that sin has reached its maturity and now possesses the very character of an individual. We call this being out of control.

### **C. TRUTHS**

1. Enduring trials lead to a crown of life.
2. Yielding to temptation can lead to death.

### **D. EXPECTED BEHAVIORS**

Since that is the case, a believer in the midst of trials, needs to do the following:

1. Be swift to hear
2. Be slow to speak
3. Be slow to wrath.

IF A BELIEVER GETS ANGRY IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, THE PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD WILL NOT BE EVIDENT IN HIS OR HER LIFE. WHEN SOMEONE WRONGS US, THE NATURAL REACTION IS TO RETALIATE, AT LEAST VERBALLY. SUCH A RESPONSE DOES NOT GLORIFY GOD! HOLDING ONE'S TONGUE, TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE OTHER PERSON'S POSITION, AND LEAVING VINDICATION TO GOD DEMONSTRATES GODLY LOVE IN TENSE SITUATIONS.

“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for

it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:17-21, NKJV)

### **E. DOERS—NOT HEARERS ONLY**

The Word of God has been **IMPLANTED** in the believer’s heart and ought be received with meekness (power under control). This of course points to a **TEACHABLE SPIRIT**—without resistance, disputing, or questioning. Receiving God’s Word in this way will **SAVE** the believer’s soul (a word meaning life).

Sin leads to death. Obedience prevents death; it protects a believer from sinful behavior that can lead directly or indirectly to physical death.

“Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-30, NKJV)

To hear and not do is but **DECEPTION**. It is to see yourself in a mirror and ignore what needs to be fixed. This is the “head in the sand mentality!”

1. Law of Liberty—this equates to the Law of Love. Loving God and loving one’s neighbor sums up the law. But it is Christ’s love that frees us

from our own sins to truly love others (displayed by His redemptive act of dying on the cross).

Obedience leads to the BLESSING of God.

“Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.” (Exodus 23:20-22, NKJV)

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.” (Exodus 19:5-6, NKJV)

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,” Says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” Says the LORD of hosts; “And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land,” Says the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 3:10-12, NKJV)

## F. FURTHER PROOFS

Control of the TONGUE—an out of control tongue is indicative of ungodliness. Such a person, even in claiming to be religious, is deceived!!!

The person with an unruly tongue is already deceived. They are either “unsaved or a hypocrite”. Such persons may hold tightly to some of the sentiments of the church but yet lack the abiding truth of God in their hearts. That person’s religion is vain, empty, idle, useless—a counterfeit of genuine worship.

We are prone to sin with our lips. We are often tempted to idle speaking. We must guard against the sin of slander.

I said, “I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me.” (Psalms 39:1, NKJV)

*Visit orphans*—this involves oversight—it is much more than just stopping by to say hello but involves offering wisdom and direction for living.

*Orphans and Widows*—these were among the most unprotected and needy classes in ancient societies. Pure religion does not merely offer material goods for the relief of the distressed, but also oversees their care.