



## The Book of James Lesson 2 4<sup>th</sup> Q 2014 The Perfecting of Our Faith

### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**Come and Reason FREE APP** is now available for ios and android. The app allows access to our materials on your smart phones and tablets. Please download the app! **Be sure and type in Come and Reason Ministries** and search in your app store as another unofficial app with our logo is out there.

**Distribution:** Our materials now are available in South Africa. To request materials in South Africa email [comeandreason.sa@gmail.com](mailto:comeandreason.sa@gmail.com)  
Thanks to Samuel Jacobs who manages distribution for us.

And in Australia or New Zealand email [australia@comeandreason.com](mailto:australia@comeandreason.com) and Thanks to Simon Harrison who manages our ministry down under. Dr. Jennings will be going back to Australia/New Zealand spring 2015. If you are interested in Dr. Jennings speaking at your group please contact Simon at this email address.

**Oct 2-4:** Dr. Jennings will be at the American Association of Christian Counselors National Convention in Branson, MO. He and Dr. Curt Thomson, will be conducting a workshop entitled, **Neurobiology and the Treatment of Mood and Anxiety Disorders**. Dr. Jennings will also be a plenary speaker and Come and Reason Ministries will have a booth to give away our materials.

**Oct 10,11:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Vallejo SDA church in Glendale, CA.

**Oct 24/25:** Dr. Jennings will be at Loma Linda University presenting a Spiritual Emphasis Weekend for the psychiatry residents and students. The Friday evening meeting will be open to the public

**Sunday Nov 16:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the First Baptist Church in Frisco Texas. Speaking for the three church services Sunday morning and then a seminar Sunday afternoon. (Dr. Jennings will be teaching his class Saturday November 15)

**Nov 22, 2014:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Placerville, SDA church in Placerville, CA.

The Weekend of **Jan 10, 2015:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at The Haven, formerly Elmshaven, SDA church.

**AMAZON Smile:** Amazon now has a program that a percent of all your purchases will be donated to support a charity. Come and Reason Ministries is a registered Charity. So, you can select us, and whenever you shop in their [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) site a portion of your purchase will benefit this ministry.

**NOTE: WARNING:** There is another ministry with a similar name called "Come Reason Ministries" and they are located in California. Please be sure and select **Come AND Reason Ministries Located in Collegedale TN**.

### SABBATH

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Read memory text, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning it shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb 12:2 NIV)

The context – from the book of Hebrews, Paul (thought by most to be the author) has just recounted the lives of all the people who were healed through trust in God.

- What is faith?
- How is it that Christ authors and then perfects our faith?
- What methods does God use?

Faith is established upon evidence, not proclamations. I had a patient, whose friends were Christian and they kept telling her she needed to have faith in Jesus, but she said "I can't." To which I said, "Of course you can't." Which surprised her. So I asked her if she were at the mall and a stranger came up



and asked for the keys to her car and house and said, “Its okay you can trust me.” would she give the keys? She said no way. Well, “If you cant give the keys of your car and home to a stranger how can you give the keys of your life to a stranger.”

Trust or faith is established by experience, by evidence of trustworthiness. Jesus is the member of the Godhead who left infinity and entered linear time to interact with His creation.

Jesus is the member of the Godhead through whom all the evidence has been provided:

- all things were made by him
- he is the one who interacted with people through history
- he is the pillar of fire and cloud and rock that Israel saw
- he became a human and revealed God in human flesh
- he voluntarily surrendered His life to heal us
- he demonstrated he would rather let us kill Him than use His power to control us

Jesus authors our faith by creating us, revealing the truth about Himself the Father and God’s methods, and leaves us free to choose.

Then how does he perfect our faith?

This is my paraphrase of our memory text, but I am starting in 11:32 and going through 12:13, because I want to give you a feel for what is being described. How God perfects our faith.

Heb 11:32 And how much more do I have to say? How many more lives do I have to recount? I don’t need to remind you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets<sup>33</sup> who through their trust in God conquered kingdoms, administered God’s healing methods, received the promised blessings, shut the lions’ mouths,<sup>34</sup> cooled the heat of the flames, escaped being killed by the sword, had their weakness turned into strength and became unstoppable in battle, annihilating God’s enemies.<sup>35</sup> Women had their dead loved ones resurrected and brought back to them. Others were tortured and refused to compromise the truth to gain their freedom, so they will gain the resurrection of life.<sup>36</sup> Some were mocked, others beaten, while still others were put in shackles or imprisoned.<sup>37</sup> Some were stoned, others sawed in two and still others put to death by the sword. They lived in poverty wearing animal skins and were constantly ridiculed and mistreated—<sup>38</sup> this selfish, sick world was not worthy of them. They lived in desolate places wandering in desert and mountains and hiding in caves.

Heb 11:39 All of these were commended for their trust in God, yet none of them received the fulfillment of all that was promised.<sup>40</sup> But don’t get discouraged, God has planned something much better for us, that they and we together will be perfectly healed and rejoice together in the earth made new.



Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded with so much evidence of God's goodness and so many people who have experienced God's healing power that comes through trust, let us rid ourselves of everything that obscures our view of God, and selfishness with its desires that so easily distract and damage, and let us diligently finish the treatment course laid out for us.<sup>2</sup> Let us fix our minds on Jesus, the perfect revelation of God who establishes and fully matures our trust in God. Jesus, for the joy of healing and restoring God's creation, endured the cross, nullifying its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.<sup>3</sup> Consider the significance of all Christ has done – the all-powerful Creator permitted his creatures to torture and kill him rather than use his power against them. So don't get tired or give up or lose heart.

Heb 12:4 In your struggle against selfishness, you have not yet had to lay down your life so that others might live.<sup>5</sup> And you have forgotten that God loves you as his children, for the scripture says:

“My child, don't make fun of the Lord's treatment, and don't get discouraged when he sets you straight,

Heb 12:6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he works to heal everyone who becomes his child.”

Heb 12:7 Endure difficulties as opportunities for growth; God is treating you as his children. For what father doesn't want his children to be healthy and grow and mature and what child is not disciplined by his father?<sup>8</sup> If you do not experience God working to heal, mature and improve you (and God works to heal everyone), then you are illegitimate children and not his true sons and daughters – you have rejected his offer of kinship.<sup>9</sup> Think about it, we have all had human fathers who instructed and corrected us and we love and respect them for it. How much more should we willingly participate in the healing plan with the Father of all intelligent beings and live!<sup>10</sup> Our fathers worked with us and taught us for just a few years, the best they could; but God works to heal us for eternity, that we may partake of his perfect goodness and love.<sup>11</sup> No discipline or therapy is enjoyable at the time, but painful. But if intelligently cooperated with, it results in healing of mind, development of Christlike character and peace of heart.

Heb 12:12 Therefore, stiffen your upper lip and straighten your spine and redouble your determination to stay the healing course.<sup>13</sup> “Remove the obstacles to your recovery,” so that the infection of selfishness may not permanently deform your character, but rather you will be healed.

So how does God perfect our faith? What methods?

The law of exertion – strength comes from exercise – if you want something to be stronger you must exercise it. So what enables us to exercise our faith? Problems and situations that we ourselves cannot fix.



Another word for faith is trust – we must have experience in trusting another for trust to grow strong.

One of the human experiences that bonds trust like no other is war, combat, soldiers who literally trust their lives to their friends, experience a bond of trust that is stronger than most bonds in life.

When we find ourselves in situations beyond our own ability to handle and fix, and choose to do what we know is our responsibility in governance of ourselves, and then trust God with the outcome, we experience a strengthening of our trust or faith in God.

Problems are like weights, consider a person going to physical therapy and working with one pounds weights, and then as they master the one pound weight what does the therapist do? Increase the weight – for what purpose? But what does the devil do as the weight goes to four, 8, 10, 20, 50 pounds? The devil tempts, “Look, he keeps burdening you. Every time you succeed with one he puts more and more and more on you. He’s trying to crush you, not help you. You can never get ahead or win with this guy.”

How many of us, in life, when we have problems or stressors, hear this evil voice tempting us to doubt God?

Understand, what is happening – why does the physical therapist keep increasing the weights? For what purpose? For our recovery, for our restoration and complete independence and autonomy. The only way to be ourselves, to be healed is to cooperate with God and go through it, God cannot overwrite our characters by divine power or else it would destroy us as individuals. We must be active, willing, choosing participants and in so doing we experience transformation, through His love, presence, and power in our lives.

Specific steps we can take to increase our faith or trust:

- Spend time getting to know God, come to an understanding of His design, methods, principles – thus know His actions are always to heal and restore
- Realize what is happening in the Great Controversy
- Remember what God has done for us in the past, for others, the stories in the Bible – fill your mind with these examples, and then our own experiences. We have nothing to fear for the future, expect we forget how the Lord has led in the past.
- Faith is strengthened by works – how? When we are given an instruction, a duty, a direction from God, and then carry it out, in the outworking of God’s providence we see and experience His wisdom, presence, knowledge, love, and our faith grows stronger.
  - In human relationships it is the same thing. Have you ever taught someone something, how to do something, and they didn’t understand, they questioned why, and you said “trust me, do it, and see” and they trusted you enough, and did it, and having done it their trust in you increased.



- If we never actually put into practice what God says, we don't get the benefit, the healing, the blessing, the growth, the maturation, and therefore, don't get increasing faith, trust and confidence in God.

Here is an historic view from Counsels to the Church:

We all desire immediate and direct answers to our prayers, and are tempted to become discouraged when the answer is delayed or comes in an unlooked-for form. **But God is too wise and good** to answer our prayers always at just the time and in just the manner we desire. **He will do more and better for us than to accomplish all our wishes.** And because we can trust His wisdom and love, **we should not ask Him to concede to our will**, but should seek to enter into and accomplish His purpose. Our desires and interests should be lost in His will. **These experiences that test faith are for our benefit.** By them it is made manifest whether our faith is true and sincere, resting on the word of God alone, or whether depending on circumstances, it is uncertain and changeable. [what does this mean? True faith means we know God and have faith in Him, regardless of events around us. Faith based on circumstances is just that, we have faith in God when events are going according to what we believe is right for us] **Faith is strengthened by exercise.** We must let patience have its perfect work, remembering that there are precious promises in the Scriptures for those who wait upon the Lord. {CCh 305.5}

Anyone want to share how their faith has been strengthened by exercise?

## **SUNDAY**

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Read third paragraph, "In short, we..." No doubt, trials are used to strengthen our faith, does this mean all trials are from God?

Just like weights, they can be used to strengthened our muscles, or they can be used to tie around a person's feet to drown them.

Trials can likewise be used to try and drown people, if they are brought by an enemy.

Job is a good example – the trials in Job's case were not needed to strengthen his faith. He was already mature in his faith, so settled into the truth nothing could move him. The trials were not therapeutic, but designed by Satan to try and destroy or overwhelm him, and perhaps his wife as well.

As the end of time approaches, the righteous will be "sealed" so settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually they cannot be moved, and trials will come. Those trials will not be for the strengthening of our faith. But, we, like Job, could not handle such trials, if we hadn't previously handled smaller trials and had our faith strengthened.



What prepares us for the larger trials are the smaller ones we successfully handle. An Olympic power lifter doesn't start out with 500 pounds, and those who are able to stand in the end will be enabled by prior experiences with God.

Is there inherent benefit in a trial? Have you ever heard things like:

- no pain no gain
- whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger
- pain is fertilizer for the soul

These witticisms are expressing the law of exertion, that there is a positive benefit of going through difficulties. Thus, can people rejoice in difficulties, because they realize the trial is strengthening them?

Why do we rejoice more if we know God, than those who do not know God?

Because we are not alone, we know there is a higher purpose than just our personal strength and growth, because we know that the trial will never be greater than we can handle, and that God will provide the means to overcome.

## **MONDAY**

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Read first paragraph, "Read James 1:2-4..." First question – what is faith founded upon? Evidence!

In this conflict between God and Satan, where is the battle ground? Our minds, 2Cor 10:3-5. And how much truth is on Satan's side? None – he is the father of lies.

How much truth is on God's side? 100%, Jesus said, the truth will set us free (JN 8:32)

So, if you have no truth on your side, do you want people looking for evidence, facts truth or believing without evidence facts and truth?

Thus, ideas that teach:

- we have faith we don't need evidence
- to question is a lack of faith
- God said, we don't question, we just believe
- Reason must submit to the word of Scripture

Or any such idea are from Satan and designed to obstruct the mind from seeing the truth.

God says, "Come let us reason together..." "You will know the truth..." "Every person should be fully persuaded in his own mind." etc.



Here is another historical view:

- **"God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith.** His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that **appeals to our reason**; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. **Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration.** Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth, will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith." *Steps to Christ* 105 (1892); *9MR* 202; compare *Education* 169
- **"God gives sufficient evidence for the candid mind to believe."** *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 232 (1876); *5T* 675; *2MCP* 672; *9MR* 204; *11MR* 288; *RH* Feb. 13, 1900
- "Here is a test which all may apply if they will. None need be left in uncertainty and doubt. **There is always sufficient evidence upon which to base an intelligent faith.** But God will never remove from any man all occasion for doubts. Those who love to dwell in the atmosphere of doubt and questioning unbelief can have the unenviable privilege. **He who turns from the weight of evidence** because there are a few things that he cannot make plain to his finite understanding, will be left to the cold, chilling atmosphere of unbelief and skepticism, and will make shipwreck of faith." *Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1886 (*2ST* 83:2:2); *4T* 232

The lesson suggests that James says we need trials to test the genuineness of our faith, is that what you understand he is saying? Or is he saying we need trials to strengthen and develop our faith?

In the pink section at the bottom it asks, "If you died right now, would you be good enough to be saved? Or if you had died two weeks after you had accepted Jesus, would you have been good enough to be saved? Do you think in six months you will be good enough? What does your answer tell you about your need for the perfect robe of Christ's righteousness..."

What is the problem with these questions?

It would be like saying, "If you took your antibiotics would you be good enough to be healed, or if two weeks after taking your medicine are you good enough to be healed..."

The problem is that the questions arise from that false legal view of God and focus the question on us, like a human court does. Are we good enough? This incites fear of not being good enough, when that isn't even the question. Rather the question is what Jesus said, that He did not come for those who are well, but for the sick. So a better question is: Do you recognize you are sick and need God's Remedy provided through Jesus? For Christ came for the sick not the well. This is why the prostitutes and tax collectors were entering the kingdom of God before the Pharisees.



## TUESDAY

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How is wisdom different than knowledge?

- Knowledge is knowing facts or data; wisdom is knowing what the facts mean and what to do with them.
- Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is fruit, wisdom is knowing it doesn't go in a fruit salad.
- Knowledge is knowing smoking is damaging, wisdom is not smoking.
- Knowledge is knowing Jesus is God, wisdom is knowing to trust Him – the devils have knowledge but not wisdom
- Knowledge is knowing God is love and His law is love, wisdom is knowing how to put love in to effective action, when to give and when the most loving action is to withhold because to give would injure or enfeeble another.

James tells us that if we lack wisdom, we should ask, but not to doubt when we ask. Read bottom pink section “We must ask...” thoughts?

Why must we not doubt? Here is James 1:2-8 from my New Testament Paraphrase, entitled *The Remedy*:

James 1:2 My brothers and sisters in God's family, I want you to rejoice and keep a positive attitude whenever you face troubles of various kinds, 3 because every trial exercises your trust in God, which overcomes fear and selfishness and builds a confident steadfast application of the Remedy. 4 And this steadfast engagement in God's treatment must be completed so that you may be fully healed, mature and like Christ in character, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you don't understand God's methods, are confused in your thinking, or lack wisdom, ask God because he, without pointing out defects, enthusiastically gives to all who ask and it will be given you. 6 But when you ask, ask with the certain knowledge that he longs to give, not wavering back and forth in fear and uncertainty like a fishing bobber tossed about on ocean waves, for your fear will obstruct your ability to receive what he longs to give. 7 Those consumed by fear will not think they can receive anything from the Lord; 8 they are unstable, controlled by emotions, and can't make up their minds about anything.

So why do those who doubt not receive wisdom? Because God refuses to bestow, or because their doubt prevents them from receiving?

## WEDNESDAY

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What contributes to doubt?

- Lack of information – ignorance
- Lies
- Immaturity
- Lack of experience





- Lack of relationship with God
- Patterns of not thinking – history of believing things without evidence, and believing things that don't make sense
- History of having a previously held belief proved false in a system of absolutism
- Problems we cannot explain
- Feelings of fear and insecurity

What is the solution to doubt?

- Evidence
- Truth
- Experience
- Relationship
- Practicing thinking for self, weighing evidences
- Identifying testable laws
- Understanding principles
- Accepting one's limitation and finiteness, allowing for answers beyond current understanding
- Not trusting feelings to be accurate
- Remembering how God has led in the past

Read third paragraph, “When the disciples...” This is an excellent point, is our faith alive and growing? Only by exercise does it grow. If we don't use it... we...

The bottom pink section asks, “What are all the reasons you have for trusting in God and His promises and living by faith?” What reasons to you have for trusting in God?

- He is love – and has revealed Himself to us
- His methods of love, freedom, truth
- How He has risked being misunderstood to do what is right
- How He has let His enemies abuse Him, without using His power to put them down
- How He is able to know the future
- How He overrules evil and brings good out of it

Specific examples in my life:

- Putting into practice His methods and seeing the freedom, peace and healing in my life and the lives of my patients
- This ministry – teaching this class, having books published, seeing the transformed lives – this is an evidence of God's working. You all know how this ministry has grown despite opposition.
- The thousands of letters and emails from people whose lives have been transformed through embracing the truth about God's character of love
- When I was in undergraduate school pre-med, I was working full time as nurse to pay my way through, I was giving Bible studies to some students at UTC, and taking a full load. I lost track



of time and realized the day before that I had a major physics exam at 8 a.m. the next day, and I was on my way to work 3-11 at the ICU. I prayed that I would have a quiet evening, so I could get a couple of hours to study. When I got to work there was only one person in the ICU, and he was in for chest pain, r/o MI, which means he was in for observation and was to have a quiet evening. I immediately said “thank you Lord!” and was so happy. But then I went over to do my initial assessment, and as I was taking the history I discovered this man was a physicist who worked for TVA. When I told him I had a physics exam the next day, he told me to bring my book over and I got a tutorial and the next day got an A on my exam.

What does it mean to live by faith? To do what is right in the choices one makes in governance of self, and trust God with how things turn out.

Consider the three worthies on the plain of Dura. Their choice, bow or don't bow – that was their choice, how it turned out was not up to them. Likewise, in our lives, our responsibility is to choose to do what is right, healthy and reasonable in governance of ourselves and trust God with the outcomes. This is what it means to live by faith.

## **THURSDAY**

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The lesson examines the struggle of the rich to enter into heaven. Jesus said it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. Why?

Let's move away from riches and instead consider physical strength – when do people seem to have a maturing faith, when they are in the prime of life, or when they are aging? Why?

As we age, we lose vitality, we lose strength, and this causes us to look outside of self for strength, thus we are led to trust God more. Consider Samson, when strong he thought he could handle anything, and he did things his way. When blind and weak, he finally trusted God, his faith grew strong.

When we are financially well off, we are tempted to have confidence in ourselves, our portfolios, our stocks, savings etc. and thus the exercise of our faith is decreased. But when we struggle, we turn to God daily, and exercise faith and thereby grow in faith. Consider David, why was it wrong for him to number Israel? Because after numbering his army he would be tempted to put his faith in his chariots, bowmen, spearmen, and not in God.

There is nothing wrong with having wealth, there is something wrong with not trusting God. Whenever we become extremely competent, capable, expert in any endeavor, we are tempted to rely on ourselves and think we can do it without God. Every day I remind myself how little I know. This is one of the beauties of medicine – that every day new discoveries come along which help remind us what we know is so small to all there is to know.



I think this is a danger for theologians as well, as they are recognized as experts and come to write and lecture on a certain viewpoint, they might become locked in and incapable of growing into unfolding truth. The Pharisees and Sadducees in Christ day certainly had this problem. That is why we never want to arrive at truth, but always when advance in the truth.

Understanding design law helps, because we accept an unfolding of truth, not a system of rigid rules.

## **FRIDAY**

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Read first paragraph, “God would have...” thoughts?

read and discuss questions 1-4