

5-1-1979

New Testament Prayer as Found in the Epistle of James

Mark Whitsett

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, m.whitsett@twc.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholar.csl.edu/mdiv>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Whitsett, Mark, "New Testament Prayer as Found in the Epistle of James" (1979). *Masters of Divinity Thesis*. 45.
<http://scholar.csl.edu/mdiv/45>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters of Divinity Thesis by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

NEW TESTAMENT PRAYER AS FOUND IN THE
EPISTLE OF JAMES

A Research Paper Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for elective
EN-200

by
Mark D. Whitsett
May 1979

Lewis Brighton
Adviser

NEW TESTAMENT PRAYER AS FOUND IN THE
EPISTLE OF JAMES

A Research Paper Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for elective
EN-200

by
Mark D. Whitsett
May 1979

Lewis Brighton
Adviser

NEW TESTAMENT PRAYER AS FOUND IN THE
EPISTLE OF JAMES

A Research Paper Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for elective
EN-200

by

Mark D. Whitsett

May 1979

Louis A. Brighton
Advisor

TO MY WIFE MARGY

FOR HER FAITHFUL PRAYERS AND SUPPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
I.. A THEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF PRAYER	5
Presuppositions Surrounding Prayer	
Prerequisites to Prayer	
The Problems Concerning Prayer	
The Power of Prayer	
II. PROLEGOMENA: CONCERNING PRAYER AND JAMES	16
Prayer	
In the Old Testament	
In Judaism	
In the New Testament	
James	
Author	
Date and Place	
Purpose	
III. THE FAITHFUL PRAYER	30
Pointers to Prayer	
Motives for Prayer	
Attitudes in Prayer	
The Result of Prayer	
Response to Prayer Answered	
IV. UNASKED AND UNANSWERED PRAYER	49
Hindrances to Prayer	
Prayer which does not Avail before God	
The Way to Availing Prayer	
V. PRAYER WHICH MOVES GOD	60
The Cries of Injustice	
The Prayers of the Church	
The Prayers of the Righteous	
CONCLUSION	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY	75

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps one may question, "Why another study on prayer?" Indeed volumes have been written on the subject much more eloquent and thorough than this study. But this may only further underscore the importance of the topic. In the New Testament alone there are well over 250 direct or indirect references to prayer. The commands to pray and the promises attached to prayer are many. This writer is convinced that as long as there are Christians in the world they will need to study this thing called prayer. And as long as there are Christians praying, prayer and its applications can never be exhausted.

Further reason for this topic is found in the ministry of Jesus. From the official beginning of His ministry to the time of His death, Jesus is continually praying. Luke records, "Now it came about when all the people were baptized that Jesus also was baptized, and while he was praying, heaven was opened..."¹ In the first chapter of Mark we read that Jesus made a habit of prayer.² (This habitual attitude of prayer will require further treatment when the prayer customs of Judaism are discussed.) Jesus' ministry was undergirded with prayer. He is the Christian's example of what prayer is or at least ought to be. However, just as Jesus' disciples had to learn to pray³ so, too must every Christian. In Christ one finds not only an example to emulate, but also

¹Lk. 3:21. All Biblical references in this work are cited from The New American Standard Bible (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, Inc., 1971).

²Mk. 1:35.

³Lk. 11:1.

a teacher to heed. One must take up Christ's yoke and learn from Him. This can only be accomplished as one listens to the biddings of the Holy Spirit in the Word.

In addition, the student of theology must be a student of prayer if he is to be truly theological. Pieper comments, "A truly Christian sermon, which properly divides and properly joins Law and Gospel, is in every case a gift from above and must be obtained by prayer..."⁴ To this Luther adds that the theologian must despair of his own wit and intellect when approaching the Scriptures. Rather one should enter into his closet, kneel down and implore God with all earnestness and humility that by His Son He would grant His Holy Spirit to enlighten, guide, and give understanding.⁵ From this the theologian must observe that prayer is not an option for him, but a vital part of his ministry in the Kingdom of God. Indeed the prayers of the theologian (or of any Christian for that matter) are to be kingdom prayers, aimed directly at the purpose of advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. This means that prayer is a weapon by which one is protected from Satanic schemes designed to upset the work of the Kingdom of God. The following exhortation is given by Luther:

This we must know, that all our safety and protection consist in prayer alone. We are far too weak to cope with the devil and all his might and his forces arrayed against us, trying to trample us under foot. Therefore we must carefully select the weapons with which Christians ought to arm themselves in order to stand against the devil. What do you think has accomplished such great results in the past, parrying the counsels and the plots of our enemies and checking their murderous and seditious designs by which the devil expected to crush us, and the Gospel as well, except that

⁴Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics Vol. III (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 243.

⁵Luther as cited by Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics Vol. III, p. 187.

the prayers of a few godly men intervened like an iron wall on our side?⁶

Having discussed the necessity of prayer one must not suppose prayer to be easily accomplished. Luther calls prayer the "most difficult of all works."⁷ But when prayer is accomplished it is a great work:

Where are the people who want to know and to do good works? Let them only undertake prayer and practice it in true faith, and they will find that what the holy fathers have said is true: There is no greater work than praying. Mumbling with the mouth is easy, or at least considered easy. But to follow the words with earnestness of heart in deep devotion ... is a great deed in the eyes of God.⁸

Since prayer is not an easy task one ought not delay in his prayers. Luther suggests that the morning and evening hours are best, so that prayer is the first and last work of the day. He warns that one must guard against false and deceptive thoughts which would lead one away from these times of fellowship into the day's business.⁹ When time is taken to pray the devil is put to flight and the Kingdom of God is enlarged.

Why a study on prayer?: (1) because the Parousia has not yet come, and therefore the Church must be on the alert through prayer until the Day of Christ; (2) because the Word of Christ compels us to pray and receive the many promises attached to prayer; (3) because the true theologian is one who prays for and receives the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit; and (4) because only continuous study of God's Word will

⁶LC.30,31 in The Book of Concord trans. and ed. by Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 424.

⁷Luther as cited by Ewald M. Plass, What Luther Says Vol. II (Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 1081.

⁸Ibid., p. 1088. ⁹Ibid., p. 1083.

perpetually remind one of God's command and carefully guide one into prayer which avails before the throne of God.

One more question which must be asked is, "Why study prayer in the Epistle of James?" At first thought one might not expect this "straw epistle" to have much to say with regard to prayer. But this is not the case. James reflects a great deal of New Testament thinking concerning prayer. In fact, one might conclude that James is driving home the centrality of faith in Christ's work of atonement which is manifest not only by confession of one's mouth and witnessed to by one's deeds, but also readily apparent in one's praying.

The primary purpose of this study is exegetical, though some time will be spent on theological and practical considerations. Three specific parts of James will be studied in expository fashion -- James 1:2-8,16-18 (The Prayer of Faith in Trials and Thanksgivings); James 4:1-10 (Unasked and Unanswered Prayer); and James 5:1,4,13-18 (Prayer Which Moves God). These three chapters will form the heart of the study of New Testament Prayer. However, in preparation for these chapters, a brief theological treatment of prayer will occur, followed by some prolegomena relating to prayer and to the Epistle of James.

The following is hardly an exhaustive study of New Testament prayer. Rather what has been attempted is to focus upon important elements surrounding the topic of prayer. These foci are especially present in James; therefore James will be the platform from which prayer is examined.

CHAPTER ONE

A THEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF PRAYER

In preparation for a study of prayer, it is perhaps beneficial to examine prayer from a more systematic viewpoint in order to gain a general grasp for the range of the topic. In addition, this helps one to understand the objective and subjective nature of prayer. W. Spear formulates the nature of the problem:

Prayer, in the Bible, is not viewed as a purely subjective phenomenon. Prayer has an objective Referrent; it is addressed to God. Prayer is seen not as purely human activity, but as the result also of the prior activity of God. Prayer, in its petitionary aspect, anticipates results which are regarded as being attributed to divine action. Prayer is thus seen to have its basis in the nature and activity of God, and is meaningful only because of that basis.¹ It is for this reason that a discussion of the objective conditions of prayer must precede the discussion of prayer in its subjective aspects.¹

To accomplish such an approach one must first arrive at an accurate concept or definition of prayer. In its most simple form prayer can be understood as a human activity. It is human speech which is addressed to God. Often in English the word "pray" denotes the request which one person makes upon another. This can take place simply on a human level or, as in our discussion here, it can ascend and have audience with God.²

There are many types of prayer. These might include adoration, thanksgiving, confession, submission, commitment, and petition.³

¹Wayne A. Spear, The Theology of Prayer (Pittsburgh, PA: The Board of Education and Publication, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1974), p. 18.

²Ibid., p. 7-8. ³Ibid., p. 8.

The last of these, petition, possibly creates the greatest difficulties for one's reason. Thanksgiving, adoration, confession, submission, and the like really don't require any action on God's part. They are primarily God-glorifying prayers. But petition is different; it moves God into action. This would appear to contradict the unchangeable nature of God. One may ask, "Why must I petition God? Is He informed by my prayers? And am I really persuading Him to do something?" Scripture indicates that God is not informed by our prayers. Without a doubt He knows our requests before we ask.⁴ And, as regards His sovereign will, this is not altered.⁵ Rather, when the Christian petitions God, he is coming face to face with a Father who delights in giving good gifts to His children.⁶ In addition, the New Testament demonstrates that God is the source and giver of all blessings.⁷

Clearly God commands prayer and indicates that the absence of prayer leaves the Christian lacking. Speaking of one who does not ask of God, Luther writes:

Ours must therefore without a doubt be the fault if we lack anything. The fault certainly does not lie in God. He is so willing, disposed and ready to give that He not only bids us ask, diligently seek, and confidently knock but also assures us with a solemn oath of hearing through his only begotten Son, whom He has ordained to be our redeemer and Intercessor..."⁸

Luther takes this thought one step further in another place, where he

⁴Mt. 6:8, 32.

⁵Fred Fisher, Prayer in the New Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), p. 72.

⁶Jms. 1:5; Mt. 7:11; Lk. 12:32.

⁷cf. Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 15:5-6, 13; Rom. 16:20; 15:3; II Tim. 4:17-18.

⁸Luther as cited in Plass, p. 1093.

says, "Therefore let the man who fails to pray not imagine he is a Christian."⁹ Thus the Christian must acknowledge that prayer has God's command and promise and should see in it a type of sacramental character (though it is not a vehicle of grace in the sense of the Sacraments).¹⁰ By his own merits one's prayer would be nothing. Nevertheless, it shall avail before God because He has commanded it.¹¹ But to this command is also added the promise that one's prayers are pleasing to God and will be heard and answered because He has sent His own Son, "who has taught us what we are to pray and has spoken the very words for us."¹²

For one to engage in the activity of prayer some presuppositions are necessary. These presuppositions surround one's concept of God and of man as well. If one is coming to God in prayer then one necessarily believes that God must be personal, immanent, powerful, and susceptible to human influence through prayer. In addition, one's concept of God will control the content, method and conditions of prayer.¹³ For prayer begins with God -- what God is and what He does. First, what God is determines the content of prayer, i.e. the things one may properly ask God to do. Second, the character of God determines the method of prayer. For example, in Mt. 6:5-6 and 7-8 the omniscience of God means that He is not informed by our prayers, for He hears our secret prayers and knows what we need even before we ask Him. Third, the nature of God determines the conditions under which our own petitions may be granted, as is demonstrated by the example of the New Testament petition where

⁹Ibid., p. 1079. ¹⁰Ap. XIII.16,17 (Tappert, p. 213).

¹¹Luther as cited in Plass, p. 1076. ¹²Ibid., p. 1075.

¹³Fisher, p. 10.

God is not manipulated by bribes or bargains.¹⁴

Perhaps even more basic to the above is the presuppositions one has about the nature of God. By coming to God in prayer one is assuming God to be Omniscient, that He has the ability to hear and perfectly understand, no matter what language is spoken or under what circumstances the prayer may occur. "The omniscience of God is important for prayer not only because it gives assurance that prayer is heard, but because it points up the necessity of sincerity in prayer."¹⁵ Next, praying to God is also a recognition of His omnipotence. This is an expression of faith on the part of the one who prays. For "prayer which places a limit upon the ability of God falls short of the standard which is set in scripture."¹⁶ Finally, to pray to God is to recognize that He is the source of all that is. There is no other to whom one may go.¹⁷ This means that God not only can make a difference in the life of the individual but also in the course of human history.¹⁸

Beyond these attributes and qualities which were mentioned, one aspect of God's nature must yet be discussed in relation to prayer. When one comes to God in prayer he recognizes the personal nature of God. This means that the sovereign God is more than transcendent. He is incarnational. Here is where the personal nature of God is revealed, in the supreme self-disclosure which took place in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the visible manifestation of the invisible God. In

¹⁴The above three points are a summary of Fisher, p. 11,12.

¹⁵Spear, p. 18-21, cf. Heb. 4:13; Mt. 6:28.

¹⁶Ibid. cf. Ps. 146:3-6; Eph.3:20; Lk. 1:37.

¹⁷cf. I Chron.29:11-13; Dan. 4:35; I Thess. 5:18; Mt. 6:30-33; I Tim. 2:1,2; Rom. 1:9-10; Phil. 1:9-11.

¹⁸Fisher, p. 16.

Jesus one comes to see how real and personal God is, for Jesus is the revealer of the love and mercy of God the Father.¹⁹ In Christ one not only witnesses the personal nature of God but also His omniscience. God is alive and continually working for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.²⁰

To approach God in prayer also means that man has some presuppositions about himself. If God is omniscient, omnipotent, sovereign, and personal than man by prayer is recognizing something greater than himself. Man, if he is to pray must see himself as weak and needing the help of some outside power to achieve fulfillment of his life. As a result man must turn to God for all the good things of life as well as for personal fulfillment. This is true for the Christian and the unregenerate alike. For even the Christian finds that he is not self-sufficient but desperately in need of God's sustenance and grace.²¹ (In regard to the above, Fisher makes the note that in the New Testament a close connection exists between the notion of man's weakness and the admonition to pray.)²²

Having noted the above presuppositions one must come to recognize what might be called the prerequisites of prayer, i.e. those conditions, attitudes, or motivations which cause prayer to avail before the throne of grace. The prerequisites discussed here will include praying in faith, according to God's will, with thanksgiving, and in the name of Jesus.

The highest prerequisite to prayer is faith. Jesus says in Mt. 21:21-22, "...truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if

¹⁹cf. Jn. 14:8-9. ²⁰Rom. 8:28.

²¹cf. Gal. 5:17; 5: 19-21, 22; Jn. 15:5; Mk. 14:38.

²²Fisher, p. 22.

you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea' it shall happen. And everything you ask in prayer believing, you shall receive."

Luther comments:

You should come to God by faith, as a little chicken hastens under the hen's wings, and say: I would not be so bold as to speak this prayer were it not done in the name of Christ. In His name I bow my knees, although I am not worthy to be heard by God. Thus we pray that our prayers may be offered in faith and flow from faith.²³

Faith is the way of effective prayer. Without faith it is impossible to accomplish anything in prayer. Therefore one must ask in what does faith consist? First the prayer of faith means that one is a Christian.

Pieper relates:

Prayer presupposes justifying faith: Only faith in the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake makes prayer a prayer "in the name of Christ," and only prayer in the name of Christ has God's command and promise (Jn. 16:23; 14:13-14). And it is only because of Christ's work that we have the boldness to approach God in prayer.²⁴

Pieper goes on to say that the prayer which does not flow from this justifying faith, is not the work of the Holy Ghost, does not glorify the redemptive work of Christ, but in reality is the work of the devil who works in all unbelievers.²⁵

Second, the prayer of faith believes that one's prayers are heard by God. The one who does not believe this is like the waves of the sea says James. That person must not expect that he will receive anything from the Lord.²⁶ Luther asks the question: "How then, can it please God, who has given a sure promise that we shall have what we ask for, if by our doubt we charge God with falsehood and violate the very spirit of prayer in the prayer we offer, casting reproach upon the truthfulness

²³Luther as cited by Plass, p. 1078.

²⁴Pieper, Vol. III, p. 78. ²⁵Ibid., cf. Eph. 2:2.

²⁶Jms. 1:7.

of God to which we appeal in prayer."²⁷ Thus when one says "amen" in prayer he is affirming that his prayer is truly heard and will be granted. Herein one's "amen" is an affirmation of faith.²⁸ In addition, the Christian must not think that his prayers are not heard because of his own unworthiness. Certainly the Christian harbors a multitude of sins which merit God's eternal wrath. But, on the other hand, these sins do not count against him since he has an Advocate with the Father in Jesus Christ who has payed our debt in full. In this way God daily forgives sins and promises to hear the prayers of the Christian.²⁹

Third, the prayer of faith is trust in the fact that God has answered one's prayer. To be sure there is no way of proving that such and such a thing occurred solely because of prayer. The question arises, "Perhaps this would have happened without prayer?" The Christian believes that prayer moves God into action. But even this he cannot prove. "No, the only basis for intercessory prayer must be faith, faith in a creative and redemptive Father who has invited us to share in his burden of love and concern for the world. Faith must be its own authentication."³⁰

Another prerequisite to prayer is that one pray according to the will of God. One must not suppose he can manipulate God. This is not what is meant by, "where two agree it shall be done."³¹ "Prayer is not the setting up of the will of self, but the apprehension and taking to self the divine will, which corresponds with the highest good of the

²⁷Luther as cited by Plass, p. 1096.

²⁸LC.119-120 (Tappert, p. 436). ²⁹Pieper, Vol. 1, p. 571.

³⁰Fisher, pp. 88-89. ³¹Mt. 18:19-20.

individual."³² Further distinction could be made by considering "conditional and unconditional prayer." Thus when praying for spiritual blessings necessary for our salvation or to the work of the Kingdom of God one should pray unconditionally. But praying for temporal gifts which have not bearing in the kingdom is conditioned by "not my will but thine be done."³³ There are instances however, when one may step out in what Pieper calls fides heroica, such as when Luther earnestly prayed for the healing of Melanchthon.³⁴ Here it would appear that the Holy Spirit had moved Luther to this kind of prayer in that the death of Melanchthon would have proved detrimental to the Kingdom of God, or perhaps his illness was due to Satanic interference. To pray according to the will of God therefore requires that one abide in the Word of Christ.³⁵ Herein one can begin to ascertain the will of God and faithfully leave all in His hands.

As one prays he also must hear the exhortation of Paul in Philippians 4:6-7 to let our requests be made known "with thanksgiving." In the New Testament, three forms of prayer are present: petition, intercession, and thanksgiving. Of the three, thanksgiving has the greatest prominence. In this prayer the Christian is to express praise to God for all of His goodness and benefits. Thanksgiving recognizes not only that God is the giver of all good gifts but also that we are unworthy to receive such favor.

The final prerequisite of prayer is that it is in the name of

³²Westcott as cited by Fisher, p. 32.

³³Pieper, Vol. III, p. 82. ³⁴Ibid., p. 83.

³⁵Jn. 15:7.

Jesus. This does not mean that every prayer must be appendaged with the phrase "in Jesus' name." This does mean that the name of Jesus is the prime factor upon which prayer is to stand and rest. For in Christ the prayer of the Christian derives its goodness and worthiness before God. In Christ's strength and power one's prayer must avail before God.³⁶

This brings us to some final questions with regard to the theology of prayer. What makes prayer effective? And what profound results can be expected? In James 5:16 one hears, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." Speaking of the power of prayer Luther states, "For next to the preaching of the Gospel (whereby God speaks with us and offers to give us all His grace and blessings) the highest and foremost work is indeed that we, in turn, speak with Him through prayer and receive from Him."³⁷ At first this seems a contradiction to the character of God in that He is changeless, without variation or shadow. Yet the effectiveness of prayer is well documented in the Scriptures. In Acts 10 God responds to the prayer of Cornelius and sends a reluctant but praying Peter to him. In Acts 12:5, Peter is released from prison as a result of the prayers of the Church. There are many other examples. Although the Scriptures teach that God answers the prayers of the righteous, it does not discuss the exact way in which God is affected by prayer. One must see this truth as through a foggy mirror and know that God has commanded prayer and given His promise to hear and answer. Thus in this way the Christian can fully expect to be effective in his praying, knowing that in prayer according to God's word of command and promise one

³⁶Luther as cited in Plass, pp. 1076,1077.

³⁷Ibid., p. 1093-1094.

secures protection from the devil,³⁸ forgiveness³⁹ and healing,⁴⁰ and can consecrate all good things unto the Lord.⁴¹

One caution which Lutheranism has made with reference to prayer is that one not place prayer on the same level as Word and Sacrament, i.e. as a means of grace.⁴² Pieper makes the following exposition:

Word and Sacraments are the means through which God deals with us men; that is, imparts to men the remission of sins earned by Christ and through this bestowal creates and strengthens faith in them. Word and Sacraments are, as Luther was accustomed to say, something God does to us. By prayer on the other hand, the believers are doing something toward God. Prayer is an exercise of faith of Christians. If now we co-ordinate prayer with Word and Sacraments as a means of grace, it can easily be regarded as a complement of the grace of God, as if God became fully reconciled and ready to forgive their sins by their work of prayer.⁴³

Here is the real crux of the matter in that prayer is not a work which merits God's favor. When one regards prayer in this way he is no longer praying in Jesus' name, but in his own; he is no longer demonstrating faith but unbelief in the Gospel.⁴⁴ Rather, prayer is the consequence of faith in the forgiveness of sins. And the Holy Spirit who by faith dwells in the Christian heart is the "efficient cause" of prayer, never ceasing in His activity of moving and directing the heart to prayer.⁴⁵ Thus prayer is the effect of saving faith.⁴⁶ In this way the prayer of the Christian has effect on all occurrences in the Church and in the world. By prayer the Word of God spread (II Thess. 3:1), peace is preserved and restored (I Tim. 2:1-3; Ps. 76:6), the state is preserved

³⁸LC.114-116 (Tappert, p. 435).

³⁹Pieper, Vol. III, pp. 216,217.

⁴⁰Jms. 5:13-18.

⁴¹Ap. XXIII.30 (Tappert, p. 243); cf. I Tim. 4:5.

⁴²Pieper, Vol. III, p. 216. ⁴³Ibid. ⁴⁴Ibid., p. 217.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 76,77. ⁴⁶Ibid., Vol. II, p. 427.

(Jer. 29:7), and warring and deceitful men are destroyed (Ps. 5:6,10; 55:23).⁴⁷

One more question remains. If prayer is not a means of grace then how is it that our Lord promises forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?⁴⁸ Speaking to this question, especially with an emphasis on the Fifth Petition, Pieper responds:

The answer is: True, we obtain also remission of sins through prayer; however, not inasmuch as prayer is a work performed by man, but rather inasmuch as there is present in the prayer "forgiveness of sins" a divinely wrought yearning for the grace of God in Christ, a velle remissionem peccatorum, hence faith in the Gospel. Thus also the Fifth Petition upholds the doctrine that man is justified without works by faith alone.⁴⁹

From this it would appear the Christian must remember that prayer is not his work so much as it is the work of God in the Christian through His word of command and promise. Because of such command and promise the Christian prayer can have powerful effect in the Church and in the world.

⁴⁷Ibid., Vol. III, p. 80.

⁴⁸Lk. 11:4,17.

⁴⁹Pieper, Vol. III, p. 216,217.

CHAPTER TWO

PROLEGOMENA: CONCERNING PRAYER AND JAMES

And adequate study of prayer needs to investigate those backgrounds which helped to formulate the New Testament concept. Though this paper's main concern is not Old Testament prayer or prayer in Judaism, nevertheless these areas must be briefly treated if one is to have a fuller picture of New Testament prayer. It will also be necessary to see how Jesus approached prayer and how this compared with the traditions of the day. In addition some examination of the language of the New Testament will be made to help conceptualize the aspects of prayer which are present there. And Finally, in order to properly study prayer in the Epistle of James, some isogogical material must be discussed.

Prayer was an important part of Old Testament piety. It was the expression of a loving, trusting, reverent relationship with God, manifesting in speech the religious consciousness of the believer.¹ Thus prayer was not just a pious duty that one performed but "piety itself come to expression."² The prayers of the Old Testament believer were directed toward the place where God had caused His name to dwell.³ This usually meant the tabernacle or temple and perhaps also certain sacred shrines such as Bethel. Luther comments on this requirement:

Thus all the people in the country and outside the country who wanted to pray had to direct their prayer and turn their hearts to the place where God dwelt personally by means of His Word,

¹Spear, p. 11.

²Ibid.

³cf. Ex. 20:24.

that they might worship no other God than Him who sat in the mercy⁴ seat above the cherubim. All prayer had to come to that spot.

The prayers of the Old Testament people were many and diverse. Spear lists six major categories⁵: (1) prayers for divine guidance;⁶ (2) prayers for provision;⁷ (3) prayers for deliverance from disease and natural dangers;⁸ (4) prayers concerning the future, of need for food and shelter;⁹ (5) prayers referring to the favor of God;¹⁰ and prayer acknowledging the value of fellowship with God.¹¹ Prayers for temporal blessing are many in the Old Testament, especially when Israel was hard pressed by enemies. However the prayer for relief and blessing was simultaneously a prayer for forgiveness and the restoration of God's favor. In this way the temporal blessings were regarded as a manifestation of God's favor and an evidence of God's glory as He accomplishes His purpose in the world.¹²

As already indicated, Old Testament prayer was largely attached to the cultus. Prayer finds its fullest expression in the worship life of Israel. Here the intercessory nature of the prayer is manifest in the service of the priests on behalf of the people and in the sacrifices. It is the typology present in the cultic worship of Israel which prepared the way for the antitype predicted by the prophets and fulfilled in the New Testament. For just as the priest interceded on behalf of the people so too the Suffering Servant of Is. 53:12 would intercede for their

⁴Luther as cited by Plass, p. 1078. ⁵Spear, pp. 12-14.

⁶Gen. 24:12-14; Ps. 143:8. ⁷Ps. 107:4-6.

⁸II Kgs. 20:1-6; II Chron. 16:12. ⁹Num. 10:35-36.

¹⁰Ps. 63:3. ¹¹Ps. 73; 51:11-12; Hab. 3:17-19.

¹²Spear, p. 14.

transgression. Likewise the sacrifices were a reminder to Israel that only through the shedding of blood could one approach a holy God.

"Whether he prayed at the sanctuary or in Babylon, the believing Israelite was conscious of his need of a covering for his sin and so prayed depending upon the promise of a Savior who was yet to come..."¹³

This prayer, like many concepts in the Old Testament, was not in the same theological bloom as in the New Testament. Nevertheless the root principles of faith, in the name of the Christ (as seen in the sacrifices), and according to the will of God with thanksgiving, were a part of Old Testament prayer. However, with the apostasy which preceded the Babylonian captivity and the subsequent return of Judah to Palestine a new legalistic strain of prayer appeared. This occurred with the rise of Judaism.

In Judaism, prayer held an unshakable position in the religious life of the people. Prayer took on a fixed pattern. It was a discipline from early youth on. "The foundation of this pattern and discipline of prayer is provided by the times fixed for daily prayer."¹⁴ Although it is difficult to ascertain exact patterns and how these developed, nevertheless certain aspects do emerge. Of prominence was the "Shema" (meaning "Hear"). The Shema was creedal in type, having a benediction coming before and after it. All men, including boys twelve years and older, were required to recite the Shema on a regular basis. Women, children and slaves were not bound to this obligation.¹⁵

¹³Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁴Joachim Jeremias, The Prayers of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 67.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 67.

Boys learned the Shema as soon as they could speak. To recite the Shema twice a day was the minimum religious practice. If one shirked the responsibility he was no longer considered a part of the community and no better than a "unreligious Brute."¹⁶

In addition to the Shema was the custom of praying three times a day. This custom appears to have been extant already at the time of Daniel.¹⁷ Daniel is described as praying three times daily in the direction of Jerusalem. These prayers took place at morning, afternoon and evening. The first to be attested individually was the afternoon prayer connected with the sacrifice which occurred at 3p.m. in the Temple.¹⁸ These three hours of prayer were completely different from the Shema. The Rabbinic literature never mentions the Shema as prayer but as "reciting."¹⁹ The three hours of prayer were entirely devoted to prayer. One prayer which was often used was called the Tephilla or "Grand Benediction," which was a string of benedictions to which the person who prayed would add his or her own petitions.²⁰ Men, women, children, and slaves were required to pray the Tephilla.

Another evidence of the more formalized character of prayer in Judaism was the "standing post." Jeremias describes in what this consisted:

After the exile, they had been organized into twenty-four courses (קורבנות), each of which in turn had to go up to Jerusalem for a week of service. Each of these courses had a lay group called a "standing post" (קורבנות). Part of it accompanied the priests and representatives of the people (קורבנות). The other part remained at home, and during its priestly course's week of service assembled in the synagogue to read the scriptures and pray, thus participating in the Temple service from a distance.

¹⁶Ibid. ¹⁷Dan. 6:11,14.

¹⁸Jeremias, p. 69, cf. Ezra 9:5; Dan. 9:21.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 70. ²⁰Ibid.

These men would gather three times a day: in the morning at the time of the morning burnt offering, in the afternoon at three o'clock when the afternoon sacrifice was burnt, and in the evening at sunset when the Temple gates were closed (הַיָּמִי).²¹

Jeremias feels that it was the Pharisees who volunteered to serve and pray in lieu of the people of their district. They were probably responsible also for extending the daily prayers said by the "standing post" from the one week of service to the whole year.

In a formal way prayer was an important expression of Judaism. The "three hours of prayer, together with the benedictions said before and after meals, were Israel's greatest treasure, the skeleton framework of an education in prayer..."²² It was into this milieu that Jesus was born. Luke 2 and 4:6 indicate that Jesus, like other Jewish boys, was instructed in the liturgical heritage of His people. This heritage most certainly accompanied Jesus into manhood and was a part of His expression of true faith. The three hours of prayer must have been a part of Jesus' "customary" participation in the worship life of His day.²³ There are passages in the Gospels which indicate this. In Mk. 1:35 Jesus is at prayer in the early morning. In Mk. 6:46 Jesus ascends a mountain in the evening to pray. Two passages indicate that Jesus participated in the afternoon prayer. In the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, Jesus describes "two men" who went up to the Temple to pray which no doubt is a reference to the regular hour of prayer. A clearer passage is Mt. 6:5. Here Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their hypocritical prayer in the market places. Jeremias comments:

This can hardly mean that the Pharisees regularly posted themselves in the market place to pray. We have rather to remember that at the moment of the afternoon sacrifice when the whole congregation prayed, loud trumpets were sounded from the Temple over the city of Jerusalem (Sirach 50:16; Tam. 7:3) to mark the

²¹Ibid., p. 71.

²²Ibid., p. 72.

²³cf. Lk. 4:16.

hour of prayer for its inhabitants. So what happens is that the Pharisees whom Jesus rebukes contrive -- apparently quite unintentionally and by chance -- to be at that moment in the midst of the crowds and so to be obliged to pray in public.²⁴

This is one piece of indirect evidence which indicates Jesus' knowledge and probable participation in the afternoon prayer Himself.

Jesus, in Mk. 12:29f, also shows that He was accustomed to reciting the Shema. When He is asked about the greatest commandment, not only does He turn attention to the commandment to love God (Dt. 6:5) but also He adds the preceding verse: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord...," i.e. the Shema.²⁵

Keeping the above traditions of prayer in mind, one can begin to appreciate how much Jesus' prayers were different from customs of the day. Indeed His righteousness exceeded that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus not only prayed in the morning, but before sunrise, a great while before day.²⁶ After the Feeding of the Five Thousand, Jesus ascends the mountain in the evening to pray (Mk. 6:46) but continues on through the night till dawn, after which He chooses His twelve disciples.

In addition to breaking the boundaries of time, Jesus' prayers were not confined to the liturgical prayers of the day, like the Shema and Tephilla which were in Hebrew. Jesus prayed in the vernacular i.e. Aramaic. Jeremias finds evidence for this in the Lord's Prayer where he identifies certain aramisms such as opheilēma/opheilein and the invocation of God as "Abba" (a term coined by Jesus).²⁷

This brings us to another departure from the custom of His day. Jesus approached God in an intimate, personal way, using the affectionate

²⁴Jeremias, p. 74.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 73-74.

²⁶cf. Mk. 1:35.

²⁷Jeremias, p. 76.

term, "Abba". Here Jesus reveals the loving relationship that God desires to have with His children. He is not stiff and formal, but He is a real "Daddy." Jesus taught His disciples to pray in this way, giving them the blueprint of "The Lord's Prayer."

These innovations of Jesus in prayer were to become a part of the life of the Church. Similar to Judaism the early Church faithfully observed the three hours of prayer.²⁸ Paul, when he exhorts his hearers to pray "continually," "without ceasing," "always," "day and night," did not mean to imply uninterrupted prayer but, as Jeremias posits, the regular hours of prayer.²⁹ Thus such passages as Rom. 12:12 and Col. 4:2 where Paul writes "to be instant in prayer" (proskarterein tēi proseuchēi) should be similarly understood since proskarterein here means "faithfully to observe a rite."³⁰ This does not mean, however, that the Church was locked into these customs. In Acts 10:9 Peter prays at noon and in Acts 12:5, 12 the Jerusalem Church prays at night for the imprisoned Peter. Paul and Silas praise God from the depths of a prison in the middle of the night (Acts. 16:25), and Paul often mentions his vigils of prayer (agrupniai).³¹

Thus the prayers of Jesus and the early Church stood in the liturgical traditions of the day. But there was also new wine, and it was not poured into old wine skins. For the Gospel superseded the fixed forms, especially in regard to the content of prayers. "What is new here can be summed up in one word, 'Abba'."³²

²⁸Ibid., p. 79, cf. Did. 8:3; Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30.

²⁹Ibid. ³⁰Ibid, cf. Acts 1:14; 2:46; 6:4.

³¹cf. II Cor. 6:5; 11:27; Eph. 6:18. ³²Jeremias, p. 81.

This brings us to a discussion of the various terms used for prayer in the New Testament. For the most part there are three basic word groups (aiteō; deomai, deēsis; and proseuchomai). In addition, there are some less significant words used. However, only two others shall be treated, i.e. parakaleō and erōtaō.

Aiteō, first, can carry the sense of "to demand." In Lk. 1:63, Zacharius "asked" for a writing tablet or in Acts 16:29 the jailer at Philippi "called" for lights and rushed into the cell of Paul and Silas.³³ In the New Testament, concrete demands are often given religious application.³⁴ For example, in Judaism one was required to give account of his religion if he was asked.³⁵ Second, aiteō may simply mean "to request." It is impossible to distinguish between the middle and active voice here.³⁶ Mayor, for example, in James 4:2ff attempts to make such a distinction by interpreting the active as the prayer of the lips and the middle as the prayer of the heart.³⁷ But this explanation is tenuous at best.

The most important use of aiteō is when it is used for petitionary prayer. Requests to men and to God sometimes stand in juxtaposition to one another as in Mt. 7:9ff and Lk.11:10ff. The petition of the small child shows the unconditional nature of what may be asked and most

³³cf. LXX. Dt. 10:12; Jer. 8:24,26. ³⁴cf. Lk. 12:48.

³⁵Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 9 vols., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964-74) 1:191. Hereafter designated as TDNT.

³⁶Ibid., 1:191,192.

³⁷Joseph Mayor, The Epistle of St. James (New York: MacMillan and Company, Limited, 1897), p. 133.

certainly fulfilled by God.³⁸ It is interesting to observe that Jesus uses aiteō only of the prayer of others and not of His own.³⁹ Prayer for Jesus is always an erōtan or deisthai,⁴⁰ though Martha thinks nothing of applying the term aitein to Jesus, too.⁴¹ The following distinction may help:

Perhaps in explanation we might suggest that the basic meaning of αἰτέω is to want something, in the first instance for oneself. When Jesus prays, however, there is no question of His wanting things for Himself, but only for others. Again αἰτέω might easily suggest a far from humble demanding, whereas Jesus never demands. Again, αἰτέω seems to presuppose a lesser degree of intimacy than ἑρωτάω. Hence αἰτέω is used of requests of the disciples to God, but ἑρωτάω of the requests of the disciples to Jesus, and of those of Jesus to God.⁴²

The verbal substantive of aiteō, aitēma carries the sense of what is demanded or requested. It is often used in the LXX of requests made to God.⁴³ In the New Testament aitēma is especially used of the individual petitions which constitute a prayer. In distinction to deēsis, aitēma points to the content of the request.⁴⁴

Also used with reference to prayer are the words deomai and deēsis. In the New Testament deomai always has the sense of "to ask" or "to seek" depending upon the context. The term is almost exclusively used by Luke and Paul (with Matt. 6:38 being the exception). The word comes to be used for requests which are made to God and therefore "to pray," "prayer," "petition." In this sense it is first used for specific prayer in concrete situations.⁴⁵ Second, the word can mean prayer as an expression of piety in general.⁴⁶ Deēsis in the New Testament is exclusively

³⁸TDNT, 1:192,193. ³⁹cf. Jn. 16:26.

⁴⁰cf. Jn. 14:16ff and Lk. 22:32. ⁴¹Jn. 11:22.

⁴²TDNT, 1:192, 193. ⁴³Dan. 6:7,12,13; Ps. 36:4; 105:5; Ps. Sol. 6:8.

⁴⁴TDNT, 1:193, cf. Phil. 4:6; I Jn. 5:15.

⁴⁵Ibid., 2: 40,41, cf. Lk. 22:32; Heb. 5:7; Rom. 1:10; I Thess. 3:10.

⁴⁶Lk. 5:33; Phil. 1:4; I Tim. 2:1.

used for "requests" to God.⁴⁷

Proseuchomai is somewhat synonymous with deomai and deēsis. "The distinction is that deisthai almost always means real asking where proseuchesthai is preferred if the fact of prayer is to be denoted with no narrower indication of its content."⁴⁸ Also, proseuchesthai always means calling on God. This is not always as clear when deisthai is used. The noun forms are more difficult to distinguish. Both can mean prayer or petitionary prayer as a regular habit.⁴⁹ It would appear that deēsis means a single, concrete act, never prayer as a phenomenon of the religious life, whereas proseuchē tends to be more comprehensive.⁵⁰

As was mentioned above, erōtaō stands in contrast to aiteō and somewhat so to deomai. Erōtaō denotes a genuine request which is humble and courteous. Often this word is associated with a deep inward fellowship such as Jesus had with the Father. Thus the sense of pray is used almost exclusively of the prayers of Jesus.⁵¹

Although the following word, parakaleō does not have a direct bearing upon a study of prayer in James, it nevertheless has indirect importain that the word is conspicuously absent. Parakaleō means "to call to," "to beseech," "exhort"(or encourage). TDNT observes that James is one long paraklēsis; he does not use the term because his admonition is more a epitasseō or parangellein rather than a prakalein.⁵²

With these backgrounds and words in mind there yet remains some

⁴⁷TDNT, 2:41 ⁴⁸Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 807, cf. Acts 6:4; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 807.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 685, 686, cf. Jn. 4; 31; 16:26; 17:8, 18.

⁵²Ibid., 5:793.

prolegomena with respect to the book of James itself. The early Church was slow in accepting James. Or at least so it appears. The epistle is not quoted or mentioned in the first or second-century. It is not listed in the Muratorian Canon which does list Jude and II John. It is first mentioned early in the third-century, in Epistolai ad Virgines (a pseudonymous writing from Palistine or Syria) and is quoted much by Origen.⁵³ In the fourth-century Eusebius classes the book as antilegomena, yet he cites it as if it were genuine.⁵⁴ The book was accepted in the West as canonical at the turn of the fifth-century.

Some have argued that if this epistle were genuinely the work of our Lord's brother than why was it accepted so late and why did the smaller Jude fare better than the long James?⁵⁵ Alternatives to authorship would be: (1) a Jewish writer whose work has been Christianized through a few brief interpolations; (2) James the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem Church; (3) an originally anonymous or pseudonymous writer.⁵⁶ Polhill believes that it is difficult to argue dogmatically as to whom the author may be. He cites the paranetic nature of the book, its use of the Old Testament, Jewish wisdom literature, the sayings of Jesus, even sayings from non-Christian Gentile thought, and the vast sweep of ethical material would argue for a later date and therefore an author other than James.⁵⁷ Guthrie has a much more cogent argument. First,

⁵³John B. Polhill, "The Life-Situation of the Book of James," Review and Expositor 66 (Fall 1969):370, 371.

⁵⁴Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), p. 737

⁵⁵Polhill, p. 371. ⁵⁶Ibid., p. 377.

⁵⁷Ibid.

there is some reason to believe that allusions to James do exist in second-century writings, particularly I Clement and Hermes.⁵⁸ Second, the general epistles as a unit have drawn lesser attention from the Church, than the specific Church epistles.⁵⁹ Guthrie writes:

On the whole it is not altogether surprising that this brief Epistle of James was not much quoted in the earliest period, for it did not possess such a wide appeal as the more dynamic Epistles of Paul. It is the kind of letter which could easily be neglected as, in fact, the treatment of it in the modern Church abundantly shows and, once neglected, a fertile soil was provided for future doubts, especially at a time when spurious productions were being attributed to apostolic names.⁶⁰

Third, the internal evidence of the epistle would indicate the following:

(1) The simplicity of the greeting would point to James the brother of Jesus who became leader of the church at Jerusalem. (2) The author's background must have been Jewish as evidenced by a vast knowledge of the Old Testament, the use of Hebrew idioms behind the Greek forms. The description of the addressees as the Diaspora would further corroborate a Jewish flavor. (3) There are similarities between the Language of James and James' speech in Acts 15. (4) James is similar to the teachings of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount. Some have suggested that James is reproducing reminiscences of oral teaching which he had previously heard. (5) James' push for moral uprightness is consistent with the picture that the New Testament paints of him (cf. Gal. 1:19). And (6) the community to which James is writing appears to belong to a period before the fall of Jerusalem. This would place the date within the lifetime of the Lord's brother.⁶¹

If James the brother of Jesus is the author, then the date of the

⁵⁸Guthrie, p. 738.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 739.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹The above six points are located in Guthrie, pp. 739-746.

epistle could be no later than A.D. 62 which is traditionally the date of his martyrdom. There is no mention of the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) in the Epistle which may be an indication of its earlier date. Some have seen in the lack of reference to the Jewish-Gentile controversy a date before A.D. 50. The extreme Jewish tone of the letter might add credence to this argument. But counter to this is the proposal that the addressees of the letter do not appear to be recent converts.⁶²

The letter is addressed to those of the diaspora i.e. "in the state of dispersion or the land of the dispersed" as proposed by Ropes.⁶³ This phrase could refer to: (1) Jews residing in dispersion i.e. Jewish Christians (Though the rest of the epistle may suggest this, the phrase alone does not.). And (2) to the Christian Church at large i.e. who are all aliens in the world and looking for a heavenly city.⁶⁴ Guthrie favors the first suggestion although he believes the second has much to be said for it.⁶⁵

The purpose of the Epistle is basically practical and would appear to be a corrective for known difficulties. James aims at such problems as a proper attitude toward wealth, the control of the tongue, oaths, prayer and other practical themes. For this reason it is difficult to have a coherent outline of the letter. This would be in keeping with the "paraenetic" nature of the book, i.e. a manner of exhortation which directs traditional instruction to a definite group. These materials have no logical development that can be derived from a

⁶²Guthrie, pp. 761-764.

⁶³James Hardy Ropes, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), p. 120-127.

⁶⁴Ibid. ⁶⁵Guthrie, p. 761.

rhetorical perspective.⁶⁶ This does not mean there is no order in James. Rather James is not slavishly bound to an outline.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Erhard Kamlah as cited by Harold S. Sanger, "The Literary Character of the Book of James," Review and Exposition 66 (Fall 1969):382.

⁶⁷Frank Stagg, "An Analysis of the Book of James," Review and Exposition 66 (Fall 1969):365.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FAITHFUL PRAYER

James 1:2-8, 17, 18

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God; who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.... Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.

The faithful prayer is one which ought to be a matter of course for the Christian. But, as is often the case, the war between flesh and spirit is a fierce one resulting sometimes in the flesh obdurately resisting the wooings of the Spirit. In the above verses James alerts his readers to the essentials of prayer, especially prayer in the face of trial and temptation.

In verses 2-8 attention will be given to: (1) those things which point one to prayer; (2) the motives for prayer; and (3) the essential attitude one must have in prayer. In verses 17 and 18 special consideration will be given to the results of prayer and how the Christian ought to respond.

Verses 2-4 appear to serve a double role. First they act as a

prologue for verses 12-15 which specifically attend to trials and temptations. This would give verses 5-8 a near parenthetical character. Second, verses 2-4 provide a context out of which "asking" (praying) is most often necessitated, i.e. trials. On the one hand trials are for the purpose of permitting faith to have its complete work in the life of the believer. Indeed they are a manifestation of God's loving discipline, designed to bring one into maturity.¹ On the other hand, trials are a means of isolating deficiencies in the Christian. When these deficiencies are perceived the Christian ought to pray (1.5). Thus trials become pointers to prayer.

James begins, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials..." The word for "all" (pasan) is used as an intensifying adjective in the sense of "full" or "supreme" and does not denote strict completeness.² "Supreme joy" at first seems ludicrous in this context, yet one must note that Christian joy is not synonymous with pleasure. Indeed, James makes this quite plain in chapter 4. Christian joy is a type of activity. It is one's delight in his (and his brothers') progress in Christian maturity. It is not undiluted pleasure.³ Mayor notes that James is here taking a "phrase of courtesy" (charan) which he previously used in verse one as a common greeting and cleverly makes it a bulwark for Christian trials and testings. For the Christian knows these trials to be a part of his training for glory. This, therefore, is reason for "joy."⁴ Indeed Jesus calls the persecuted "happy" (Mt. 5:10-12),

¹cf. Heb. 12:9-11. ²Ropes, p. 129.

³James B. Adamson, The Epistle of James (NICNT) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), p. 53.

⁴Mayor, p. 31,32.

that they should rejoice because their reward in heaven is great. Likewise, Paul points out the practical value to affliction in that as we are comforted by God in the midst of our own affliction, we can then effectively comfort those who are afflicted with the same comfort (or if you will, "joy") we have received from God.⁵ Peter makes this addition, "...but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation."⁶ Thus "now," "once and for all" (hēgēsasthe) joy is to sustain the Christian as he is surrounded (peripisēte) by trials.⁷ The phrase hotan peripisēte with the aorist perhaps indicates that James is speaking of the many separate occasions of temptation, i.e. "each single instance," or "as often as."⁸ The "trials" (peirasmos) as a noun clearly means "affliction," one of the most common tests of character.⁹ As a word group peirasmos is used to refer to temptation to sin, which, as an assault, can also be a test. This development in meaning agrees with the secular use of peiraō (i.e. a "pirate" or "attacker").¹⁰ Both Ropes and Mayor view the temptations in verse 2 as external assaults, such as trials in persecution (cf. I Cor. 4:9f; II Cor. 11:23f) as opposed to internal conflicts.¹¹ Adamson, however, disagrees with this distinction, citing that in the Christian life "there is really

⁵II Cor. 1:3-4.

⁶I Pt. 4:12,13.

⁷A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, 6 vols. (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1930-33), vol. 6: The General Epistles and the Revelation of John (1933), p. 11.

⁸Arthur Carr, Cambridge Greek Testament: The General Epistle of James (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1930), p. 11.

⁹Ropes, p. 133, cf. Lk.22:28; Acts 20:19.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.; Mayor, p. 32.

no effective difference between the two: only the defects inherent in human nature make it possible for external or internal stimuli to goad a man into sin..."¹²

In verses 3 and 4 testing is necessary to the active exercise of faith.¹³ Without it, perseverance (hupomonē) is impossible. I Peter 1:6-7 makes this connective between faith and trials, stating that trials are the test of faith. Note here that James changes the word for "testing" to dokimion, a word which indicates the means or instrument by which one is tested.¹⁴ Faith in this context refers to the assured belief in Jesus Christ and is the "supreme energizing principle for the Christian life."¹⁵ Carr explains:

The Christian life therefore consists in activity of faith, but this activity or exercise of faith is rendered possible by peirasmoi, or trials that are the test or touchstone (to dokimion) of faith: the complete and perfect result... of an active faith is hupomonē, patient endurance or a capacity of resistance to evil.¹⁶

This "steadfastness" or "staying power" (not "patience") was a virtue highly prized by the Jews as was frequently demonstrated from their history beginning with Abraham on down, especially mentioning the examples of 4 Macc.¹⁷ Christianity inherited this attitude with the difference that in the New Testament "steadfastness" is used chiefly for unswerving constancy of faith and piety in spite of adversity and suffering.¹⁸ This is not a mere passive quality but carries the sense of activity in resistance as well as a capacity for resistance to tempt-

¹²Adamson, p. 53. ¹³Carr, pp. 11,12.

¹⁴Mayor, p. 33, cf. Prov. 27:21. ¹⁵Carr, p. 12.

¹⁶Ibid. ¹⁷Ropes, pp. 135,136.

¹⁸Ibid.

ation and evil.¹⁹ Jesus said, "By your perseverance (hupomonē) you will win your souls."²⁰ James in 1:12 says, "Blessed is the man who perseveres (hupomonē) under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."²¹

But James does not stop with constancy of faith. Ropes writes:

We must not rest satisfied with constancy but must see that it produces those further fruits which make up completeness of character.... The constancy here referred to is constancy in faith from which completed character may be expected to spring. This is closely similar to the characteristic Pauline doctrine of faith working itself out (or made effective) in love.²²

By the words teleioi and holoklēroi James is not indicating perfection or completeness in a strict sense but is indicating a standard of Christian maturity, character, and understanding,²³ especially in moral growth.²⁴ Holoklēroi carries the special sense of being complete in all its parts. It was a word often used of a victim which was without blemish.²⁵ Thus in trials the Christian is given opportunity for growth, constancy of faith and finally perfection and completeness at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁶

At the end of verse 4, James uses the phrase "in nothing lacking." This is a negative way of restating the completion and perfection of faith one attains in trials. But, in addition, the word leipomenoi (lacking) forms an important link with verse 5 which begins, "But if any

¹⁹Carr, p. 12. ²⁰Lk. 12:19. ²¹cf. also Rom. 5:3-5; II Thess. 3:5.

²²Ropes, p. 137, cf. Gal. 5:6; Rom. 6:1-23.

²³Mayor, pp. 34, 35. One should note that in later writers teleios often was used of the baptized. (Thus Clement of Alexandria Paed. 1.6, p. 113f.)

²⁴Ropes, p. 138.

²⁵Mayor, p. 35.

²⁶I Thess. 5:23.

of you lack wisdom let him ask of God..." Here one is shown that trials are important pointers to the deficiencies of one's faith and therefore are pointers to prayer. For if anyone "lacks" (leipō) he is to ask (aiteō) of God.

A perceived lack ought to motivate one to prayer. For leipō means to fall short, be left behind, or be inferior.²⁷ Here the thing lacking is wisdom. It would appear by beginning verse 5 conditionally with ei James is assuming the lack of wisdom to be an actual circumstance.²⁸ Indeed, trials reveal the kinds of attitudes which reside in one's heart. The Christian is to have the mind of Christ. But if any different attitude is present, Paul tells us that God will reveal it.²⁹ To have the mind of Christ means to forget what lies behind, pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus. Thus to have a lack revealed is not for the purpose of discrediting the believer but for the purpose of drawing one into a closer fellowship with God, i.e. moving on to perfection. Therefore when trials reveal a lack in Christian maturity this is not a time for despair but for praying.

The wisdom (sophia) which James mentions is not the wisdom of the Stoics but is "the supreme and divine quality of the soul whereby man practices righteousness."³⁰ James further explicates this wisdom in 3:17, "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy."

²⁷William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 471.

²⁸Robertson, p. 13.

²⁹Phil. 3:15.

³⁰Ropes, p. 139, cf. II Chron. 1:10-12; Wisd. 7:7ff; 8:7; 9:10-18.

This wisdom can only come from God. Proverbs 2:6 says, "For the Lord gives wisdom, from His mouth come knowledge and understanding."³¹ Ropes believes that this emphasis on wisdom is a thoroughly Jewish concept.³²

The idea of wisdom and perfection are often joined in the Scriptures (I Cor. 2:7; Col. 1:28). To James, wisdom is the principal thing to which he gives prominence as St. Paul does to "faith," St. John to "love," and St. Peter to "hope."³³ But this is not to say that wisdom is something in conflict with the above. Rather, wisdom is the right exercise of faith in the presence of trials. Without such wisdom one could not remain steadfast in trial, for he would not see that it is God who is at work both to will and do His good pleasure.

The key to the attainment of this wisdom is prayer. In the Wisdom of Solomon 7:7, prayer is indicated as the effectual means of attaining wisdom: "Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me."³⁴ Cooper, citing Cadoux, makes the following observation: James "implies that to come to God in prayer is to invite divine criticism upon our desires, which accepted, will transform them into that with which he can and will cooperate."³⁵ Wisdom then becomes the special promise to sincere prayer.³⁶

The word for "ask" (aiteō) is present active imperative perhaps

³¹cf. Eccles. 1:1; 39:56; Wisd. 8:21; I Kings:7:9-12.

³²Ropes, p. 139. ³³Mayor, p. 36.

³⁴Apocryphal quotes are cited from The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha (RSV), ed. by Bruce Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

³⁵Cadoux as cited by Robert M. Cooper, "Prayer: A Study in Matthew and James," Encounter 29 (Summer 1968): 276.

³⁶Ibid.

literally translating "let him keep on asking," indicating that such prayers are an ongoing concern.³⁷ Luther writes on this aspect of prayer:

Prayer has hitherto upheld the church; therefore we must continue to pray. This is why Christ says: Ask, seek, knock! (Matt. 7:7). To begin with, we should ask. When we, then begin to ask, He hides Himself somewhere and will not hear, and will not let Himself be found! Therefore we must seek Him out, that is, must continue in prayer. When we so seek Him, He locks Himself in a closet. If we want to go into Him, we must knock. When we knock once or twice, He acts as if He had not heard us. Finally, when we are about to overdo the knocking, He opens and says: Well, what do you want? Lord, I want this or that. Then He says: Why, then take it! In this way one must wake Him up.... Therefore the verse Ask, etc (Matt. 7:7), wants only to command: Ask, call, cry, seek, storm! And we should do this constantly, without ceasing.³⁸

Jesus also exhorts His followers to be diligent in prayer in Lk. 21:36, "But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." Here one gains a sense of the eschatological significance of prayer. Geldenhuys comments on this passage saying:

Therefore everyone must constantly watch against sin and straying in his own heart and life, and must pray that God will enable him to stand firm amidst all temptations, struggles, and distress that will accompany the prelude to the end, so that he may be able to stand before Christ as one of the redeemed and not shrink away from Him with shame into everlasting wretchedness.³⁹

One should also note that in James the word aiteō appears four times, all of which are directed toward God.⁴⁰ At this point James confronts the reader with the personal nature of God. Peter reminds

³⁷Robertson, p. 13.

³⁸Luther as cited in Plass, p. 1089.

³⁹Norval Geldenhuys, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 544.

⁴⁰Mayor, p. 36.

his readers, "And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon the earth."⁴¹ First, God is addressed as Father, i.e. as the giver of all good gifts. Second, He is addressed with fear. This is not only because of His majesty but also because the Christain has been bought with a price, the blood of God's own Son Jesus Christ. Nevertheless Jesus has set this holy fear into perspective when He taught the Church to pray "Abba," Father. All the prayers of Jesus in all four gospels have this in common, with the exception of the cry from the cross (which is a quote from Ps. 22:1): they all invoke God as "Father."⁴²

This brings us to another motive for prayer. The Heavenly Father is the "giving God." His readiness to give ought to motivate one to pray not only in the greatest need but also in the least significant. For God's generosity extends to "all". The word aplōs, here translated "generously," carries the notion of frankness and open-heartedness. But as an adverb (as here) there are no other examples in the New Testament. Therefore it would seem best to keep the ordinary sense of "unconditionally" which better contrasts with the following mē honeidizontos.⁴³ This last phrase is simply a negative statement of the positive didontos aplōs. God gives in a full and free way. Here, perhaps, is a contrast to the words of Sir. 4:22, "...and do not upbraid after making a gift." James completes the verse with the promise "and it will be given to him," meaning not only wisdom but all good gifts.⁴⁴ (This

⁴¹I Pt. 1:17.

⁴²Jeremias, p. 77-78. cf. Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:6; Mk. 14:36.

⁴³Mayor, p. 37. ⁴⁴Robertson, p. 13,14.

aspect will be treated at greater length in verse 17.)

Verse 6 directs one to a basic attitude in prayer, i.e. faith. Nowhere does James give a definition of faith. Chapter 2 is an illustration of the proper manifestation of faith, but this does not really define it. Apparently James assumes that his readers know what it is. Frank Stagg finds the following elements of faith in the Book of James:

Faith is seen as steadfastness (hupomonē) in the face of trials and temptations (1.3), dynamic but not static. It is a trust in God that does not waver (1.6). It rejects partiality as evil and any "cult of person" as contrary to God's choice of the poor and humble (2.1; 5). Rather than being mere intellectual belief, it is dynamic trust bound up with serving, working, perfecting, and justifying, especially characterized by obedience to God's will and fulfillment of the royal law of love for neighbor (2:14-26). It is the trust that prays (5.15). Trust in God, obedience to his will, service or the works of love, the whole of one's existence under the will of God -- that for James is faith.⁴⁵

Mayor, however, sees this faith flowing out of a trusting relationship with Jesus Christ and living in the sure hope of eternal life.⁴⁶ Mayor writes:

By this faith he, [James] means trust in the loving will of God revealed to us in Christ, and the reception of His Word into our souls, as seed into a good soil (1.17,18). If we retain our trust in God's all-wise, just and loving providence, in spite of the trials which He permits, the habit of endurance is strengthened and thus we grow up to the full stature of Christian manhood (1.4). The opposite to faith is worldliness...⁴⁷

From this viewpoint the prayer of faith is one which first proceeds from the heart which has been justified by God's grace. However, Lenski adds that this prayer must be offered wholly in the interest of faith, its constancy and the Christian's own becoming complete.⁴⁸ "This prayer

⁴⁵Frank Stagg, "Exegetical Themes in James 1 & 2," Review and Expositor 66 (Fall 1969):402.

⁴⁶Mayor, p. 309. ⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 209,210.

⁴⁸R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistle to Hebrews and of the Epistle of James (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), p. 537, 538.

offered in faith has the direct and unqualified promise that it will be given what it asks; for the one thing God wants to do is to bring the faith of everyone of us to this completeness."⁴⁹

New Testament prayers of faith are many. Jesus even in the depths of depravity cried from the cross "Eli, Eli," "My God, My God," demonstrating his unfainting confidence in the God who had presently forsaken Him.⁵⁰ Because of such faith Jesus could pray, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."⁵¹ But the prayer of faith is acceptable to God only because it first proceeds from Christian faith. (Thus Jn. 9:31, "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God fearing, and does His will, He hears him." Here prayer is not denied to the truly penitent. It is hypocritical prayer which has no intent of obedience which is denied.⁵²) Second, to pray in faith means to trust God hears one's prayers as is reflected in Sir. 7:10, "...be not of faint confidence in thy prayer."⁵³

Third, the prayer of faith is to have a certainty that one's prayers are answered. Mk. 11:23-24 states:

Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be taken up and cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them and they shall be granted you.

Cranfield sees in this passage a type of hyperbole to indicate that one is to be absolutely confident in God's readiness to respond to

⁴⁹Ibid. ⁵⁰Mt. 27:46. ⁵¹Lk. 23:46.

⁵²C. K. Barret, The Gospel According to St. John (London: SPCK, 1978), p. 363 (cf. Jn. 16:23-27; I Jn. 3:21f; Is. 1:5; Ps. 66:18; 109:7; Prov. 15:29; Job 27:9; 35:13).

⁵³cf. Mt. 26:46.

faith.⁵⁴ In Rabbinic literature the "mountain remover" was the one who could remove difficulties of interpretation. In this context Jesus is indicating that God will, in response to faith, enable the disciple to do the impossible.⁵⁵ Lenski makes the notation that Jesus simply commands His disciples to "go on believing" that you did receive them. The word elabete "did receive" is aorist. The disciples are to go on believing while praying that God has already granted their prayer, which will appear in due time; even as Jesus adds: "and you shall have it."⁵⁶ In the parallel passage of Mt. 21:21-22 Lenski makes the further comment that "believing" means that on God's part "all is certain, but on our part this certainty must produce trust, true reliance on that certainty. If doubt breaks this connection, insults God instead of honoring him and his divine power, nothing will result."⁵⁷

Doubting is never a part of faith. There is no profundity in it. James makes this clear with the phrase meden diakrinomenos. The word for doubting is in the middle voice meaning to set two issues before oneself and to be in a critical hesitating state of mind. The picture is much the same as judicial hesitating which ceases when a verdict is given.⁵⁸ Hence, the idea of dispute comes forth. The tense here implies

⁵⁴C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to Mark (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), p. 361.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospels (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), p. 307.

⁵⁷R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1943), p. 824.

⁵⁸Carr, p. 14.

a continuance of hesitation which is not a Christian attitude. God desires honest and frank prayer even as His giving is frank and honest. How distasteful is the prayer prayed with proper words but not meant from the heart.⁵⁹ To ask with doubt is to be like the ebb and flow of the tide, like waves driven by the wind. Thus to ask in this way not only reflects instability but lack of confidence in God. "An unstable man assumes that God is unstable also."⁶⁰ James calls this man dipsuchos, literally "two-souled" or double minded. The "two-souled" man stands in stark contrast to the man of faith. The man of faith is constant, rejoices in trials and sincerely prays for divine wisdom. But the double minded man is totally opposite. His entire way of life lacks constancy. He is divided between God and the world. His prayers, therefore, lack true faith. Luther makes this final comment with regard to prayer and faith:

Thus God has briefly set before us all the afflictions that may ever beset us in order that we may never have an excuse for failing to pray. But the efficacy of prayer consists in our learning also to say "amen" to it -- that is, not to doubt that our prayer is surely heard and will be granted. This word is nothing else than an unquestioning affirmation of faith on the part of one who does not pray as a matter of chance but knows that God does not lie since he has promised to grant his requests. Where such faith is wanting, there can be no true prayer.⁶¹

In verse 5 James alerts his readers to the giving nature of God. Again in verses 16-18 His generosity is once more explicated. Previous to these verses James emphasized that God is not the author of evil. He was against the dangerous suggestion that God is also the ultimate cause behind temptation and sin. Counter to this James states, "Every

⁵⁹Lenski on James, pp. 538, 539.

⁶⁰Stagg, "James 1 & 2," p. 393, cf. Heb. 6:19; Eph. 4:13,14.

⁶¹LC.119-120 (Tappert p. 436).

good thing bestowed (dosis) and every perfect gift (dōrēma) is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow." Dosis is the act or mode of giving which may be right or wrong while dōrēma is the gift itself.⁶² Here, however, the giving and the gift have their origin in God who does what is good and perfect for those whom He loves. This is the kind of results one can expect from his prayers -- good and perfect ones. As Paul says: "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13)." God can only give good gifts. To do otherwise would be a violation of His nature.

James calls God the "Father of lights." The meaning here perhaps is twofold. First, God is the creator of all heavenly bodies (sun, moon, stars, planets and the like⁶³), and He is also the creator of the angels or "hosts of God" which were often identified with the heavenly bodies.⁶⁴ Thus in this sense God, as the Father of lights, harkens back to the original goodness of the creation and of the control which He has over all things. Second, the term Father of lights refers to intellectual spiritual light⁶⁵ such as in Eph. 5:8, "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of the light." In I Jn. 1:5, "God is light and in Him there is no darkness." Here then is the God who has engaged in the Great cosmological struggle and overcome the powers of darkness. In Him nothing is hidden.

God's nature is further explained by James by continuing the light metaphor, "with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." The words used here are parallagē and tropēs aposkiasma. Some have seen in

⁶²Carr, p. 19.

⁶³Gen. 1:3, 14-18; Ps. 135:7.

⁶⁴Gen. 28:7; Is. 14:12.

⁶⁵Mayor, pp. 56, 57.

the term parallagē a reference to an astronomical term, i.e. a parallax. A parallax is the difference between the directions of a body as seen from two different points or an apparent change in position by the earth (such parallax were calculated by Aristarchus c. 250 B.C. and Hipparchus 162-127 B.C. Therefore the thought would not have been unfamiliar in James' day.)⁶⁶ If viewed as a scientific term, paralagē would refer to the immutability of God. Mayor, however, maintains that paralagē simply denotes variation from a set course, rule, or pattern. Therefore the word would express the differences or variations of light intensity such as between the sun and the moon.⁶⁷ In this context, God's goodness in giving is of the same intensity and dependability.

The second phrase tropēs aposkisma is an equally difficult metaphor. Again, some posit that this is at least a quasi-astronomical term, possibly referring to the edge or shadow of night caused by the rotation of the earth or perhaps even a popular phrase for the setting of the sun.⁶⁸ Thus the Father of Lights is absolutely undimmed and continuous in splendor.⁶⁹

Verse 18 makes one aware of the type of quality gifts God gives, for we are "the first fruits of his creatures." The word of truth, the proclamation of the Gospel is the greatest of God's gifts. Through the blood of the New Covenant, God has consecrated all believers unto Himself. Thus all Christians are dedicated to Him. With a view to this kind of gift which has already been given, the Christian should pray in all confidence, expecting to receive God's blessings.

⁶⁶Carr, pp. 20,21; cf. Wisdom of Sol. 7:17; Dt. 33:14; Job 38:33.

⁶⁷Mayor, p. 57.

⁶⁸Carr, p. 21.

⁶⁹Ibid.

Although not directly treated here in James, connected with God's good gifts is His blessings. Paul writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ..."⁷⁰ God in His giving of good gifts has not left His Church deficient. We ask and He gives. He is not fickle. Just like earthly fathers know how to give good gifts, so, too, God gives His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.⁷¹ In view of such blessing we in turn bless Him in worship, praise, and thanksgiving.

To understand the extent to which it means to be blessed by God (and to bless Him), it will be helpful to study how "blessing" is used in the Scriptures. The most common word for blessing is eulogeō. In secular Greek it literally means "to speak well" i.e. to speak firmly or well of someone. It can also mean to extoll (eulogize). The idea of blessing plays a meager role in the classical world.⁷²

In the Old Testament, blessing is an important concept, used some four hundred times in the LXX. TDNT makes the following comment:

According to primitive belief something material comes with the blessing. Once set in motion, as when a father blesses his child, the operation is irresistible unless thwarted by equally strong opposing forces. Men and things which are blessed are as it were endowed with this power and can transmit it, affecting everything with which they come in contact. What has been said applies to the fullest possible degree when the blessing comes directly from the deity. In this case it is a supernatural furtherance of man's action and course which proceeds from the deity.⁷³

There are many types of blessing. (1) Man carries the power to bless his heirs. The content of the blessing is originally the mastery which the father gives to the son before the father's death. He can do this only once and the action is irrevocable.⁷⁴ (2) Blessings are usually

⁷⁰Eph. 1:3. ⁷¹Luke 11:13. ⁷²TDNT 2:754, 755.

⁷³Ibid., p. 755. ⁷⁴cf. Gen. 27:1ff; 48:15; 49:25f.

in the form of prayers (Gen. 49:25). Thus the one who possesses and dispenses all blessings is God. One should note that this is a personal and not a magical involvement, seen first in the creation (Gen. 1:22) and second with men in history (for example, Adam, Noah, the Patriarchs, Moses). God's presence with man was especially fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ who is present with His Church in His Spirit by Word and Sacrament. (3) Blessing takes place in the cultus through sacred acts and through asking Yahweh's blessing in prayer.⁷⁵ (4) A curious reversal occurs when man blesses God.⁷⁶ "The Israelite who knows that his whole life is in the hands of the creator cannot find any better expression for his faith and gratitude and hope than by giving God the glory."⁷⁷

By the time of Jesus, blessings were imparted according to specific rules. The Aaronic Blessing is an established part of the temple cultus. Only the priest can give the blessing. All forms of prayer begin with praise of God (בְּהַלְלָתוֹ). The recital of blessings were especially used on the Day of Atonement. And the Jew used blessings particularly at meals. This was a stringent requirement, for nothing could be eaten before a blessing was pronounced. The idea behind this was that the whole world belongs to God. Only those who take with thanksgiving truly receive from God. He who does not, robs God.⁷⁸ Of course table blessings were extremely important in the Passover Meal.

⁷⁵cf. Gen. 14:19; II Sam. 6:18; I Ki. 8:14.

⁷⁶cf. Gen. 24:48; Dt. 8:10; Dan. 3:57ff.

⁷⁷TDNT 2:756-759 (points 1-4 are a summary of these pages).

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 759-761; cf. Ps. 24:1; 115:16; Lev. 19:24; Dt. 8:10.

New Testament blessing is much the same as in the Old Testament. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows how Melchizedek, the greater, blesses the lesser Abraham(7:1). In Heb. 11:20f Isaac blesses Jacob and Jacob the sons of Joseph by faith, i.e. in unshakable confidence in the great promises of God to Abraham.⁷⁹ As in the Old Testament, God blesses the people of the New Testament. Mary is blessed as the mother of the Messiah.⁸⁰ But most blessed is the Messiah.⁸¹

The ministry of Jesus is a demonstration of what it is to bless and be blessed. According to the custom of the day He blessed food at meal times.⁸² The only difference was that He does not look downward as prescribed but upwards, perhaps showing the open relationship He had with His Father. And on Maunday Thursday Jesus blesses bread and wine in an extraordinary way.⁸² Jesus also blessed people directly, such as the little children,⁸⁴ the disciples at His ascension,⁸⁵ and also the Church.⁸⁶ Jesus also introduces a radical concept to blessing when He says to bless those who curse you.⁸⁷ This made a deep impression upon the early Church.⁸⁸

A most important use of blessing in the New Testament is the recognition of the need to bless God. Zacharias and Simeon bless God.⁸⁹ Mary sings her magnificat.⁹⁰ Even Jesus blesses the Father.⁹¹ Such blessings as these become more prominent as one considers those portions of the New Testament which are specifically devoted to thanksgiving.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 761. ⁸⁰Lk. 1:28,42. ⁸¹Mk. 11:9f; Mt. 21:9; Lk. 19:38.

⁸²Mt. 14:19; Mk. 8:6,7. ⁸³Mk. 14:22; Mt. 26:26.

⁸⁴Mk. 10:16. ⁸⁵Lk. 24:50ff. ⁸⁶Rom. 15:29

⁸⁷Lk. 6:28; Mt. 5:44. ⁸⁸Rom. 12:14; I Cor. 4:12.

⁸⁹Lk. 1:64, 68-79; Lk. 2:26-32. ⁹⁰Lk. 1:46-55.

⁹¹Lk. 10:21.

Paul exhorts in Phil. 4:6, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." In this instance thanksgiving is given for benefits received from God in the past which confirm ones trust that He will not fail to answer in the present.or in the futrue.⁹²

The word used for thanksgiving is the common one used in the New Testament. The word is eucharisteō. This word is synonymous with eulogeō as is apparent by comparing Mk. 8:6,7 and Mk. 6:41. Like eulogeō, euchariseō is connected specifically with the thanksgiving which is given at meal times.⁹³ Jeremias makes the observation concerning Jesus that when He gives thanks He is not just following custom; more than this He is actualizing God's reign here and now.⁹⁴ Thus the Church carries on in this mode of gratitude toward God, for thanksgiving is both a Christian duty and a form of worhsip.⁹⁵ Indeed Jesus is Lord and the Church must not only petition Him in faith but also praise Him for His good and perfect gifts. Thus this chapter might best end with the words of Rev. 19:6-7;

...Hallelujah! For the Lord God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.

⁹²F. W. Beare, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philipppians (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1959), pp. 146,147.

⁹³TDNT 9:407-415.

⁹⁴Jeremias, p. 78.

⁹⁵Fisher, pp. 60-61; cf. Heb. 13:15.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNASKED AND UNANSWERED PRAYER

James 4:1-10

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasure. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?" But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Chapter four of James follows on the heels of what appears to be a transition in 3:18 suggested by the word "peace" (eirēnēn). James has been contrasting heavenly wisdom with earthly wisdom (that which is of the world, natural, and demonic, manifest in jealousy, selfish ambition, and disorder). In verse 18 James concludes by saying, "But the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who are making peace."¹ Thus the words of 4:1-10 come sharply upon the ears of his listeners, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?"

¹Translation my own.

In this chapter James takes square aim at unasked and unanswered prayer. It will be our purpose to examine what might be identified as hindrances to prayer (vss. 1-2), prayer which does not avail before God (vss. 3-6), and the way to availing prayer (vss. 7-10).

Verses 1-2 specifically reveal some hindrances to prayer. The first hindrance that exists is quarrels and conflicts (polemoi and machai). These conditions militate against the wisdom discussed in chapters 1 and 3 of James. In reality they are the fruits of unrighteousness.

Several proposals have been made as to what the historical setting was. The word polemos speaks of the chronic state of campaign while machai are the separate conflicts or battles in the war. Thus James covers the whole ground in these two words.² Carr believes that both of these expressions refer to private contentions, although the wider meaning of the words would point toward national or international wars.³ On the basis of New Testament usage Mayor indicates how these words generally refer to any outburst of passion (thus polemoi) or chiding and disputing (thus machai).⁴

In contrast to such warring and battling are the words of Jesus, "Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."⁵ Paul tells Timothy, "Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without wrath and dissension."⁶ Likewise, Peter gives this instruction, "...not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult,

²Robertson, p. 49. ³Carr, p. 51.

⁴cf. Titus 3:9; II Tim. 2:22f; Gal. 5:15; II Cor. 7:5 and Gen. 31:36; Neh. 13:11; Jn. 6:52.

⁵Lk. 6:28. ⁶I Tim. 2:8.

but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing."⁷ Prayer cannot proceed from warring and strife and be acceptable to God. For if the fellowship of God is truly praying for one another quarrels will not be commonplace.

Bonhoeffer makes this pointed comment:

A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses. I can no longer condemn or hate a brother for whom I pray, no matter how much trouble he causes me...

How does this happen? Intercession means no more than to bring our brother into the presence of God, to see him under the cross of Jesus as a poor human being and sinner in need of grace... To make intercession means to grant our brother the same right that we have received, namely, to stand before Christ and share in his mercy.⁸

But even the warring and the battles which James mentions are more or less surface manifestations of a much deeper difficulty, the source of the problem is pleasure (hēdonōn) at war in their members. This is the sore spot. The word "pleasure" stands in sharp contrast to the "joy" of chapter 1:2. In the New Testament hēdonōn is always in a bad sense and is a danger to the spiritual life.⁹ The potential pleasure seated in each person constitutes a hostile force, lying in ambush and against which the Christian has to be on guard. This is what James is indicating by the phrase "wage war". The word is strateumenon. It is a present middle articular participle meaning "to carry on a campaign."¹⁰ Peter uses the term in the same way when he says, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which

⁷I Pt. 3:9.

⁸Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together (New York & Evaston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1954), p. 86.

⁹Carr, p. 51; cf. Lk. 8:14; Titus 3:3; II Pt. 2:13.

¹⁰Robertson, p. 49.

war against the soul."¹¹

Some discussion has arisen as to whether internal or external strife is indicated here. Gal. 5:17 shows that in every believer exists a spiritual conflict between flesh and spirit ending in such way that the person is not able to do the things he pleases. Paul further reflects this inward conflict in Rom. 7:15, 23:

For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate...but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

Indeed internal wars do take place in the believer. The flesh strives for pleasure and the Spirit for joy in faith. Here in James the problem is not one of internal or external strife. Rather the problem is the pleasures which have their seat in individual people. These pleasures are conflicting not only with the Spirit of God but with each other. Therefore clashes and open conflict develop.¹²

In verse 2 James explains in detail the connection between hēdonai, polemoi, and machai: ungratified desire leads to murder (phonos) while zeal for pleasure unable to reach its end to quarrels (polemoi) and conflicts (machai).¹³ It is difficult to comprehend that literal murder has been the result among James' readers; but Townsend believes that real murder is in view. He suggests that James could have been writing to recent converts who were Jews and whose political sentiments were with the Zealot movement. Therefore the terrorist type activities of the Zealots might be the charges which James is bringing against

¹¹I Pt. 2:11.

¹²Ropes, p. 253.

¹³Ibid., p. 254.

these new Christians.¹⁴ However, keeping in mind the more general tone of the Epistle, it would appear that James is applying hyperbole, but a hyperbole which harkens back to the words of Jesus:

You have heard that the ancients were told, "You shall not commit murder" and "Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court!" But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, "Raca," shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, "You Fool," shall be guilty enough to go into the hell of fire.¹⁵

John makes the explicit statement, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."¹⁶ These statements would lend some support to the suggestion that James is overstating the situation in order to point out the hideousness which exists in the hearts of his readers. However, one must not suppose that intense malice of the heart could not have resulted in actual murder.¹⁷ Whatever the case, personal pleasures do have mastery over James' readers to the point of "murderous" contentions. By aiming at pleasure they have cut themselves off from the only source of true satisfaction.¹⁸

At the end of verse 2 James gives his readers another reason why their desires are not met; "You do not have because you do not ask."

Ropes makes this observation:

So long as men allow their lives to be governed by epithumia to hēdonōn, their desire is sure to be unsatisfied. The only sure source from which men can always receive is God. By choosing pleasure as their aim, men cut themselves off from this source, for they do not ask God for gratifications such as these or, if they do, they only find that their prayers, aiming at their own pleasure and not at his service, are unacceptable, and that they ought not to have offered them.¹⁹

¹⁴Michael J. Townsend, "James 4:1-4: A Warning Against Zealotry?" The Expository Times 87 (April 1976): 212.

¹⁵Mt. 5:21,22.

¹⁶I Jn. 3:15.

¹⁷Ropes, p. 255.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 258.

¹⁹Ibid.

Perhaps James is also referring to the words of Jesus, "Until now you have asked nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."²⁰ Luther makes the following commentary on this phrase in James:

He who gets and finds nothing has certainly not asked and sought, and obviously he to whom the door is not opened has not knocked. Ours must, therefore, without a doubt be the fault if we lack anything. The fault can certainly not lie in God. He is so willing, disposed, and ready to give that He not only bids us ask, diligently seek, and confidently knock but also assures us with a solemn oath of hearing through His only-begotten Son, whom He has ordained to be our Redeemer and Intercessor, when He says: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Matt. 17:5). But now the Son of God says: "Verily, verily, I say to you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you" (John 16:23). May God grant no success to lazy hands, which do not grasp this opportunity. Amen.²¹

Not only do James' readers not have because of their unasked prayers, but also when they ask they ask "badly" (kakōs). James indicates what kind of asking his readers do by having "ask" in the indirect middle, thus meaning, "you ask for yourselves"²² i.e. as an instrument of selfishness.²³

Jesus had much to say about these kind of prayers. One might classify them as hypocritical prayers. Hypocritical prayer (especially that of the Scribes and Pharisees) is characterized as showy and repetitious versus the more secretive and straightforward prayer.²⁴ Hypocritical prayer honors God with the lips but the heart is far away from Him.²⁵ Thus Jesus says, "Not every one who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."²⁶ The hypocritical prayer is prayed in pride, not

²⁰Jn. 16:24.

²¹Luther as cited by Plass, p. 1093.

²²Ropes, p. 50.

²³Mayor, pp. 133,134.

²⁴Mt. 6:5-15.

²⁵Mk. 7:6,7.

²⁶Mt. 7:21; cf. Lk. 6:46.

recognizing the sin present and the unworthiness of the one who prays. By contrast, God promises that the prayers of the righteous and the penitent will be heard.²⁷ John writes, "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight."²⁸ One should note that this answer to prayer is not a reward for meritorious action but because the prayer itself rightly coincides with the will of God.²⁹ "The sole object of the believer is to do thoroughly the part which has been assigned to him: his petitions are directed to this end and so are necessarily granted."³⁰

Thus James both upbraids the one who does not pray and the one who asks wrongly. For the one who asks wrongly wants to "spend" it on his pleasures, whatever they may be. This is the exact opposite of Mt. 6:32,33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all things shall be added unto you." For the Christian in seeking the kingdom of God desires God to be glorified and not man.³¹

In addition to pointing out their badly motivated prayers, James charges his readers with unfaithfulness. He calls them adulteresses, friends of the world but the enemies of God. The word "adulteress" (moichalidei) calls to mind the unfaithfulness of Israel to God.³² The Children of Israel were renegades with regard to their vows to God, who

²⁷cf. Ps. 34:15-17; 145:18; Prov. 10:24; Ps. of Sol. 6:6; Lk. 18:9-14; I Jn. 5:14.

²⁸I Jn. 3:21, 22.

²⁹Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle of St. John (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), p. 119.

³⁰Ibid. ³¹cf. Jn. 12:27-30.

³²cf. Is. 54:5; Jer. 3:20; Ez. 16:23; Hos. 9:1.

is pictured as the husband to which they were joined. To this corresponds the New Testament Church which is the bride of Christ.³³ The unfaithfulness of James' readers is of the same type. It is manifest in their friendship with the world. Robertson states, "To be a friend of the world is to be on good terms with the person and forces and things that are at least indifferent toward God, if not openly hostile to him."³⁴

Scripture has a great deal to say about the Christian and the world. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."³⁵ John admonishes, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him."³⁶ Mayor makes this observation:

The world is in the heart of man. There may be endless differences in point of refinement between the various forms of the world; but in so far as they all tend to separate us from God and lower our standard of duty, the influence of all is alike baneful. He who makes it his chief aim to gain the favour of his world thereby becomes an enemy of God. And yet all the while each separate soul, included in the aggregate of worlds, is itself the object of God's love, though the worldly influence, which in the Bible often goes by the name of the world, is so hateful to God that, as we have seen, no man can love it without becoming His enemy.³⁷

Conversely, to be the friends of God means to be the enemies of the world. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."³⁸

³³cf. II Cor. 11:1,2; Eph. 5:24-28; Rev. 19:7; 21:9.

³⁴Robertson, p. 260. ³⁵Mt. 6:24. ³⁶I Jn. 2:15.

³⁷Mayor, p. 219. ³⁸Jn. 15:19.

There can never be any fellowship between God and the world. For this reason James reminds his readers of the kind of God we have. First, He is a jealous God. James indicates this by the word epipothei. God earnestly or jealously desires the Spirit He has placed in the Christian. He will not permit His Spirit to be tampered with or by friendship with the world. This Divine jealousy desires nothing but the best good for the one He loves, and hates that which would injure and degrade it.³⁹ In His jealousy, God seeks those who will be His true worshipers, worshiping Him in spirit and in truth.⁴⁰ What enables the Christian to do this is the fact he is the temple of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ Therefore when the temple of God is desecrated, God moves into action.

Second, God is a God of grace. Ropes states, "God makes rigorous requirements of devotion, but gives gracious help in order that men may be able to render the individual allegiance he exacts."⁴² At this point James quotes the LXX version of Prov. 3:34, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." The "proud" are those who despise the claims of God, devoting themselves to worldly pleasures and position. They insolently look down on others, especially the pious. Thus they are haughty both toward God and man, and here are identified with the friends of the world.⁴³ Luke 14:11 states, "For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted." Herein exists a holy tension between God's grace and judgement. To those who resist Him by remaining friends with the world He gives judgement. But to those who repent He shows mercy.

This brings us to the way of availing prayer. To this point James

³⁹Mayor, p. 220; cf. Ex. 20:35.

⁴⁰Jn. 4:23-24.

⁴¹I Cor. 6:19.

⁴²Ropes, p. 265.

⁴³Ibid., p. 266.

has shown that quarrels, strife, pleasure seeking, lack of prayer, badly motivated prayer and friendship with the world are at enmity with God and do not avail before the throne of grace. In verses 7-10 James uses six imperatives for not only godly-living but for availing prayer. These are: submit and resist, draw near and cleanse, repent and be humble.

First, James calls upon his readers to submit and resist, i.e. submit to God and resist the devil. This is a reversal from their previous stance of friendship with the world. To submit (hupotagēte) means to take God's side and place oneself under Him as Captain.⁴⁴ Resist (antistēte) literally means to "stand against" the devil. The aorist imperative denotes an instantaneous, not continued action, and is therefore used in an urgent entreaty or command.⁴⁵ The given promise is that the devil will flee from you. Mayor comments that this promise of the devil's flight gives an answer to those who might plead in excuse, pointing to the power of the tempter or the force of circumstances ordained by God. However, Christ's temptation is an example of submission to God's appointment, followed by flight of the devil.⁴⁶ For this reason Paul says, "Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."⁴⁷ And Peter, too, says, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith..."⁴⁸ Finally, to resist the devil is to not give him opportunity.⁴⁹ Yet in all this the Christian must remember that he

⁴⁴Carr, p. 54.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Mayor, p. 140.

⁴⁷Eph. 6:11.

⁴⁸I Pt. 5:8, 9.

⁴⁹Eph. 4:27.

resists while under submission to a gracious God who has redeemed him in Christ Jesus.

Second, James says, "Draw near and cleanse your hands." The phrase "draw near" is a term used of the priestly office as they drew near to make sacrifice for themselves and for the people.⁵⁰ This drawing near takes place as a result of the perfect sacrifice made through the atoning blood of Christ. Through Him we can draw near to the throne of grace. Commenting on Heb. 7:19, Westcott states:

All believers are by virtue of their Christian faith, priests: I Pet. 2.5,9; Rev. 1.6; 5.10; 20.6. That which was before (in figure) the privilege of class has become (in reality) the privilege of all; and thus man is enabled to gain through fellowship with God the attainment of his destiny (τελευτήσις).⁵²

Thus the command to draw near is followed by the command to cleanse one's hands. The picture is that of ritual cleansing which here implies a cleansing from sin.⁵³ Only when one is free from sin can he draw near to God.

Third, in verses 9 and 10 the picture is one of repentance and complete humility before God. This is a call to deny oneself, take up his cross, and daily follow Christ. These verses are also a picture of the sober earnestness which is the proper decorum of the Christian. Indeed if one does mourn and weep now when there is time to repent, what weeping there will be when all time has expired.⁵⁵ But for those who live in humility under the Lordship of Jesus Christ there is the promise of sorrow turned to joy.⁵⁶ This is the way of availing prayer.

⁵⁰ Mayor, p. 141; cf. Ex. 19:22; Ez. 44:13.

⁵¹ cf. Heb. 4:16; 7:19.

⁵² Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 187.

⁵³ cf. I Pt. 1:22; I Jn. 3:3.

⁵⁴ II Tim. 2:3-5.

⁵⁵ Lk. 6:25.

⁵⁶ Jn. 16:20.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRAYER WHICH MOVES GOD

James 5:1,4,13-18

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you... Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth... Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you can be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

In chapter 5 James moves on a new tack. Specifically in verses 13-18; he gives instruction concerning prayer. However, in the earlier part of the chapter, James does allude to cries which do come before God though not specifically referring to prayer. As one looks at this chapter as a whole there emerges an overarching emphasis on the prayers which move God. For the sake of convenience these have been divided into three categories: (1) the cries of injustice, (2) the prayers of the Church, and (3) the prayers of the righteous.

The cries of injustice are mentioned specifically in verse 4. However, it is necessary to gain some impression of the context before this verse can be discussed. Chapter 5 of James begins with an exhorta-

tion to the rich. Both Mayor and Carr agree that James is no longer addressing those Christians who are philanderers with the world. Rather, non-Christians are in view.¹ This argument is based on the type of act which is ascribed to them as well as the absence of appeal to any Christian principle. This is in marked contrast to the paragraph which follows, in which "the brotherhood" is addressed once again.² Robertson, however, believes James to be addressing the rich or a class such as in I Tim. 6:17: "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge man into ruin and destruction."³ Thus James' plea is not directly for reform, but a warning of certain judgment for the oppressor, and for Christians a "grim" comfort in the hardship of poverty (cf. 5:7-11).⁴

In verse 4 the reason for the impending judgment on the rich are the cries (krazei) of unpaid laborers. Krazō frequently is used in Scripture of the appeal against injustice.⁵ These cries are not so much concious appeals to God against the oppressor as they are conditions of injustice which God in His wrath militates aganst. Certain sins cry out to God for public vengeance. In Gen. 4:10 the blood of Abel cries out to God from the ground. Martyred Christians are promised vindication in Rev. 6:9-11. God is the defender of the helpless, strangers, widows, orphans, the poor and the enslaved who cannot cry to God that He would intervene.⁶ In the case mentioned by James, the explitation of workers

¹Mayor, p. 148 and Carr, p. 58. ²Carr, p. 58.

³Robertson, p. 57. ⁴Ibid., cf. Lk. 6:24.

⁵Carr, p. 61; cf. Judges 4:3; Ps. 21:5; Is. 5:7 in the LXX.

⁶Pieper, V. I:570. cf. Ex. 22:21-24; Is. 3:14-15; Ex. 3:7-9.

is explicitly forbidden in Dt. 24:14-15:

You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns. You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he may not cry against you to the Lord and it become sin in you.

Ecclesiasticus 34:22 says, "To take away a neighbor's living is to murder him; to deprive an employee of his wages is to shed blood."⁷ Thus because of His compassion for the poor and the oppressed, God is moved by their cries.

Perhaps not unrelated here are the words of Paul in Rom. 8:26-27:

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Cranfield observes that the problem is not that the Christian does not know "how" to pray but does not know always "what" to pray for. (The Greek is $\tau\acute{\iota}$ and should not be translated as $\pi\acute{\omega}\varsigma$.)⁸ Cranfield further comments:

We take Paul's meaning to be that all praying of Christian men, in so far as it is their praying, remains under the sign of this not-knowing, of real ignorance, weakness and poverty, and that even in their prayers they live only by God's justification of sinners.⁹

Thus the Spirit Himself helps our weakness by interceding for us according to the will of God, and God is moved into action.

God is also moved by the prayers of His Church. In verses 13-16b the person in need is to seek out the prayers of the Church. James

⁷cf. also I Tim. 5:18; Mt. 10:10; Lev. 19:13.

⁸C. E. B. Cranfield, The Epistle to the Romans, vol. 1, (Edinburgh, England: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1975), p. 421.

⁹Ibid., p. 422.

speaks of two basic groups of people. First are the suffering or unhappy. These are those people who are unhappy or depressed because they are experiencing trouble of some kind. This unhappiness is not on account of their faith (as was the case of the prophets in the previous paragraph), but is the result of the misfortunes which all men suffer at one time or another.¹⁰ The second group are the "happy" or those who are "full of courage," A third group, which is probably a subdivision of the first, are those who are sick and therefore unhappy.¹¹

Each group is given an exhortation by James. The first group is to simply pray to God, who gives generously to those who lack wisdom. The second group is to sing praises to the God who has given them good and perfect gifts. The last group, however, is to call for the elders (presbuteros) of the Church. The use of the aorist imperative (v.14) indicates that this action is to be taken immediately. If Wilkinson is correct this would also mean the calling is a one-time action.¹²

The nature of the sickness which requires the prayers of the Church as represented by the elders¹³ is not described. James simply calls it a weakness (astheneō) in verse 14 and a weariness in sickness (kamnō) in verse 15. One thing is certain. By the use of astheneō, exorcism is not in view, for this verb is used largely in passages denoting physical disease in a pathological sense.¹⁴

The function of the elders is to pray over the sick man, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. The process of anointing with

¹⁰John Wilkinson, "Healing in the Epistle of James," Scottish Journal of Theology 24 (August 1971):327.

¹¹Ibid., p. 328. ¹²Ibid. ¹³Ibid., p. 336.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 331,332.

oil is not explained by James. Therefore one may assume that this is not a new procedure. Elaion (oil) is the word for olive oil which was used for dietetic, toilet and medicinal purposes. There are two words for "anointing" in the New Testament, (1) chriō, the official and ritual word for anointing used only in the figurative sense, and (2) aleiphō which is a humbler usage, usually meaning to apply oil for toilet purposes.¹⁵ James uses the humbler word. On the basis of usage it would appear that James is alluding to the contemporary medical methods of healing by applying oil to the body of the sick person, perhaps indicating the ministry of the Church to the whole man. Cranfield, on the basis of Mk. 6:13, believes that anointing with oil, though a common medical treatment, was for the disciple a symbolic gesture perhaps meant to direct attention away from the malady to the person of God.¹⁶ Lenski, on the other hand, sees in James 5:14 a medical use which has been sanctified through prayer. This would mean that the prayer prayed, accompanied with the anointing with oil, shows that this oil is a gift from God and to be received with gratitude. The prayer does not impart any additional sanctification over and above the oil's intrinsic goodness. Yet the prayer does indicate the oil's sacredness.¹⁸ This interpretation may be further supported by the phrase "in the name of the Lord." Thus the anointing with oil is both medicinal and religious in the sense that

¹⁵cf. Mt. 6:17; Lk. 7:46; Lk. 10:34.

¹⁶C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to Mark (Cambridge: The University Press, 1963), p. 201.

¹⁷Lenski on Mark and Luke, p. 152.

¹⁸J. N. D. Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1963), pp. 96, 97. cf. I Tim. 4:3-5 and Ap. XXIII.30 (Tappert, p. 243).

that God is sought in prayer to bring healing and recovery to an individual and at the same time asked to bless the use of the oil.

It is worth noting that James is not the only place in the New Testament which connects prayer with other procedures. Most prominent was the practice of the laying on of hands.¹⁹ Speaking of when Jesus layed hands on the small children, Lenski remarks that the imposition of hands accompanied with prayer is a symbolical act. It is an invoking of divine blessing upon the person touched.²⁰ This blessing does not flow through the hand but comes through the words that Jesus speaks.²¹ In other places the laying on of hands is used to denote the setting aside of an individual for a particular office in the Church.²² However, in the disputed section of Mk. 16 (v.18) laying hands on the sick and subsequent recovery are associated. Perhaps what is in view with all these passages is not so much that the laying on of hands in and of itself produces anything so much as it is the entire "sacramental" context in which the laying on of hands takes place. This is not to say a means of grace is intended. Rather, through prayer and the visible representation of God's presence through the laying on of hands by those who have been appointed by the Church, a context for healing or blessing or setting aside for a particular office is provided. In this way the accent is on God and not on man.²³ It is also an accent upon the fellowship of

¹⁹cf. Mt. 19:13; Acts.19:6; Acts 6:6; Mk. 10:13-16.

²⁰R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1943), p. 741.

²¹Lenski on Mark, p. 266. ²²cf. Acts 6:6.

²³There are other objects which accompany prayer in the N. T. However, only the laying on of hands is treated here because of its relationship to healing and its visible character. Other associations include: Prayer and Fasting (cf. Lk. 5:33; Acts 14:23; Lk. 2:36-38; Acts 13:2,3),

of the Church and its role as intercessor on behalf of its members.

In verse 15 of chapter 5, James gives the assurance that the prayer (euchē) of faith will restore the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up. Again, James lays emphasis on the prayer of faith. This is the only type of prayer which will be effective with God. The prayer of faith does not act as a charm to produce the recovery.

Lenski comments:

The application of oil soothes the body to a certain degree; the prayer comforts and strengthens the mind and the soul by placing the patient into the Lord's hand with faith and confidence in his gracious will. It is the Lord who raises up the patient to renewed health and strength. The prayer directed to him moves him, even as he himself has promised. The elders do not bid the patients to rise up and walk. The Lord will raise the man up in recovery.²⁴

Notice that the faith of the sick man is not mentioned in this passage though it may be implied by his calling for the elders. Here, the faith of the elders receives emphasis, meaning that the elders who pray for the sick yield their concern and faith into God's hands.²⁵

Through the faithful prayers of the elders the sick man will recover, be raised up from his bed of sickness and will have any sins forgiven which he may have committed. The forgiveness of sins is an important aspect. Wilkinson writes:

James says that if the sickness is the result of some personal sin then this sin will be forgiven the sick man. The clear implication of this is that there are some illnesses which are due to personal sin, and there are some which are not...but we cannot go on to say that a man's sickness is always due to his own personal sin.²⁶

sexual abstinence for the purpose of prayer (cf. I Cor. 7:5), singing and prayer, (Acts 16:25; Rev. 15:3-4), and various postures in prayer (I Cor. 11:4,5; Acts 20:36).

²⁴Lenski on James, p. 675.

²⁵Fisher, p. 97.

²⁶Wilkinson, p. 333.

Robertson makes the additional note that this forgiveness is not anything magical and not because the person has been healed, but because a change of heart has taken place, turning to God through Christ.²⁷

The Church has a vital ministry in the forgiving and retaining of sins. In verse 16 James writes, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you can be healed..." The congregation receives healing benefits through prayer and confession. Note that the words "confess" and "pray" are in the present tense, implying that both of these should be the usual activities of the Church, especially, in the context of illness.²⁸ In addition, this encouragement to mutual confession and prayer is an indication of the close sympathy and fellowship which were a part of the early Christian community.²⁹

John promises, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."³⁰ When such confession takes place within the context of the Church, the Church acts as the go between by forgiving the sins of the penitent and retaining the sins of the unrepentant. But the Church is not acting on its own initiative; rather, it is merely ratifying on earth what has been judged in heaven.³¹ When confession is made there is remission of sin and its consequences as well as a cleansing of the sinner from God-separating moral imperfection.³²

Indeed the Church ought to always be ready to forgive. The forgiving prayers of Jesus on the cross and of Stephen while dying a

²⁷Robertson, p. 65. ²⁸Wilkenson, p. 329. ²⁹Ibid.

³⁰I Jn. 1:9. ³¹Fisher, pp. 155,156. cf. Mt. 18:15-20.

³²Brooke Foss Westcott, The Epistle of St. John (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 23.

martyr's death ought also to be the prayers of the Church.³³ The prayer of Stephen was most surely answered in the person of Paul, and the prayer of Jesus on Pentecost.³⁴ However, John speaks this following exception,

And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.³⁵

This passage is difficult. At first John reminds his listeners of the confidence they can have in prayer as they pray according to God's will. The Christian can pray for the weak brother who has fallen into sin and God will restore him. Yet, for the one who sins a sin unto death, that is, resulting in damnation, John does not give the command to pray. (But he does not forbid prayer either.) Pieper comments concerning this passage:

It is clear that the sin unto death cannot be simple unbelief, for it is our duty to pray for the unbelievers (I Tim. 2:1,4; the First and Second petition; the example given us by Christ and Stephen). Nor does the Apostle refer to those who on account of their manifest apostasy are excluded (excommunicated) from the Christian congregation. For such men intercession is to be made, since the purpose of excommunication, the last sharp remedy is to bring them to faith and save them (I Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:6-11). But since in the case of the "sin unto death" intercession is excluded, this term can be only another appellation for the sin against the Holy Ghost.³⁶

Pieper then goes on to define the sin against the Holy Spirit as the malicious denial of the divine truth which is well understood by him and approved of by his conscience. This is manifest in the perpetual

³³Lk. 23:34; Acts. 7:59-60. ³⁴Acts 2:22-42.

³⁵I Jn. 5:14-16. ³⁶Pieper, V. I:572.

blasphemy and obstinate rejection of all the means of grace.³⁷ The main difficulty in this approach is the way in which one can discern such a condition. Perhaps the point is that such a sin will be self-evident.

Connected with the forgiveness of sins in James is healing. Some dispute, however, has arisen over the healing which is spoken of in verse 16. In the present context bodily healing seems to be what was intended. However, the word iathēte ("healing"), which by the way is in the aorist subjunctive passive indicating the possibility for healing to take place, is also used of the healing of the soul.³⁸ Indeed I Pt. 2:24 states, "...and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

There is no doubt that the prayers of the Church move God not only as is related to confession and absolution but also in all matters of life which have a bearing on the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst." (Mt. 18:19-20) Two is the smallest number for "church". Yet even this minimum is enough to accomplish the necessities of the kingdom. M'Neal observes that the agreement of the two is not something which forces God to answer. Rather this implies that the two have met as disciples. This involves making only such requests as the Master will endorse.³⁹ This would be the force of what is meant by Jesus

³⁷Ibid., p. 573.

³⁸Robertson, p. 66. cf. Mt. 13:15; Heb. 12:13.

³⁹Alan Hugh M'Neal, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (New York: Macmillan & Co. L.T.D., 1957), p. 267.

being in the midst of them. This thought also has parallel in Jewish thinking, "Two that are sitting and occupied with the words of Torah, the Shekinah is among them."⁴⁰ Thus the prayers of the Church are to be sent forth as incense.⁴¹

Not only do the prayers of the Church move God, but also the prayers of the righteous man. James says, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." There is some discussion as to the voice of energoumenē. If middle then the emphasis would be that the prayer of a righteous man is a strong force, an effective remedy in its working.⁴² If passive, then the prayer of the righteous man finds its effectiveness in that the prayer has been activated or inspired by the Holy Spirit (as in Rom. 8:26). This is the interpretation which Mayor holds, based on the evidence of early Greek and Latin commentaries as well as the usage of non-biblical Greek.⁴³ This interpretation certainly is attractive, for it places the emphasis upon God and His action. Whichever interpretation one may choose brings one to the ultimate conclusion that God responds to the prayers of the righteous. Abraham pleads on behalf of Sodom that God would spare the city for the sake of fifty, forty-five, thirty, twenty, and finally ten righteous. If there had been but ten righteous God would have spared the city on account of Abraham's prayer. But even though the city was destroyed the family of Lot was preserved.⁴⁴ Luther acknowledges prayer's effectiveness when he says:

This I know: As often as I have earnestly prayed, prayed in dead earnest, I have certainly been very freely heard and have

⁴⁰Pirke Aboth III.3 as cited in M'Neal, p. 267.

⁴¹Rev. 8:3-4.

⁴²Carr, p. 68.

⁴³Mayor, pp. 171-173.

⁴⁴Gen. 18:23-32.

received more than I had desired. To be sure, at times our Lord God has delayed a little while; yet He has heard. What is delayed is not denied.⁴⁵

James is sure to emphasize that the prayers of the "righteous" avail. I Pt. 3:12 states, "For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." In Hebrews we are told that Jesus was heard because of his "piety".⁴⁶ And John says, "And whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight." Here the obedience is not the grounds for fulfillment, but because the believer is praying according to God's will.⁴⁷ For this reason Jesus says, "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."⁴⁸ Jesus even goes so far as to say that through the prayers of the Christian greater works will be accomplished than those which He did.⁴⁹ The works of the Christian are greater not because the Christian is greater than Jesus but because Jesus' work of redemption is now complete.⁵⁰ Thus only the righteous can pray an effective prayer. For prayer is the work of the Christian.

In addition, when the righteous pray it is to be an earnest, fervent or begging prayer. Lenski makes this observation when he points out that the word for pray in verse 16 is deēsis; thus a petition or fervent asking on behalf of someone else or on behalf of self.⁵¹ This fervency is a reminder of the unceasing nature of prayer. Paul reminds the Christians to "Pray without ceasing."⁵² Morris comments on this:

⁴⁵Luther as cited by Plass, p. 1095.

⁴⁶Heb. 5:7.

⁴⁷Westcott, p. 119.

⁴⁸Jn. 15:7.

⁴⁹Jn. 14:12-15.

⁵⁰Barrett, p. 460.

⁵¹Lenski on James, pp. 678, 679.

⁵²I Thess. 5:17-18.

It is not possible for us to spend all our time with the words of prayer on our lips, but it is possible for us to be all our days in the spirit of prayer, realizing our dependancy on God for all that we have and are, realizing something of His presence with us wherever we may be and yielding ourselves continually to Him for the doing of His will. Were there is such an inward state: it will find outward expression in verbal prayer...⁵³

Jesus also promises a speedy answer to the persistent, fervent prayer of the righteous.⁵⁴ Paul over and over again makes mention of the gentile churches in his prayers. The examples in Scripture are many.⁵⁵ The point being that as the Christian keeps praying he will keep seeing the results of his prayers.

As a final assurance that God hears the prayers of the righteous, James gives the example of Elijah. It is interesting to note that Elijah has nothing to do with healing here but is an example only of righteous prayer. Of equal interest is the fact that in I Kings 17:1ff and I Kings 18:1ff there is not explicit allusion to prayer. It is merely implied. Nevertheless, James uses this great Old Testament man of faith as an example for his readers because Elijah was a man of like substance and nature with all men. By faith Elijah prayed and by faith the Christian must pray as well. Luther has this final word:

As we have said, a Christian always has the Spirit of supplication with him, and his heart is continually sending forth sighs and petitions to God, regardless of whether he happens to be eating or drinking or working. For his entire life is devoted to spreading the name of God, His glory, and His kingdom, so that whatever else he may do has to be subordinated to this.⁵⁶

⁵³ Leon Morris, The Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 102, 103.

⁵⁴ Lk. 8:1-8.

⁵⁵ cf. Phil. 1:2-5; Col. 1:2-3; I Tim. 5:5; II Tim. 1:2-4; Philemon 3-4.

⁵⁶ Luther as cited in Plass, p. 1082.

CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubt that prayer is a powerful tool in the hands of the Christian. But that power is only demonstrated when prayer is used. To not pray is to fail to see oneself as an integral part of the Kingdom of God. As a member of that kingdom, the Christian soldier needs to pray "kingdom prayers", prayers which grab hold of the promises of God and use them against the powers of Satan. In this way the powers of Satan are put to flight and the Gospel has free course.

All too often in Lutheran circles prayer is disparaged in an unwitting fashion. A brother or sister in Christ may recount how they prayed and what they prayed for was accomplished, concluding that God was moved by their prayer. Yet the Lutheran theologian in response is all too quick to emphasize the negative, that prayer is not a means of grace, i.e. prayer in and of itself is not the effective cause of God's gracious acting. This, however, misses the point that although prayer is not causative, it certainly is attached to God's word of command and word of promise. Hence a prayer's effectiveness must be found in its relationship to the word of God. Thus we pray because: (1) God has commanded us to pray and because (2) God hears our prayers on account of the Word of promise which He has made in connection with prayer. This makes prayer God's action from start to finish. For the Christian to pray is simply to enter into the work and will of God.

In connection with petition and intercessory prayer it is important to underline the role of faith, for these prayers are asked in view of

the faith relationship one has with God. In other words they are (1) an expression of obedience to a God who loves us and (2) an expression of the Kingdom of God which is manifest in the Christian. To not petition is to resist the Spirit of God who bids us pray for all men, for those in authority, and for the household of faith. When one does not pray he is, so to speak, holding his spiritual breath. He is stymieing the Kingdom of God at work in him.

But to pray is to experience the good and perfect blessings of God. They are good and perfect because they can especially be gainfully used in the Kingdom of God. In response to such gifts the Christian has the joy and priviledge of giving God the honor for all these blessings through thanksgiving and worship. In this way prayer becomes a wonderful response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adamson, James B. The Epistle of James. The New International Commentary on the New Testament, edited by F. F. Bruce. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976.
- Arndt, William F., and Gingrich, F. Wilbur. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Barrett, C. K. The Gospel According to St. John. London: SPCK, 1978.
- Beare, F. W. A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1959.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. Life Together. New York & Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1954.
- Bratcher, Robert G. "Exegetical Themes in James 3-5," Review and Expositor 66 (Fall 1969):403-413.
- Carr, Arthur. Cambridge Greek Testament: The General Epistle of James. Cambridge, England: University Press, 1930.
- Cooper, Robert M. "Prayer: A Study in Matthew and James," Encounter 29 (Summer 1968):268-77.
- Cranfield, C. E. B. The Gospel According to Mark. Cambridge: University Press, 1963.
- Cranfield, C. E. B. The Epistle To the Romans, Vol. 1. Edinburgh; England: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1975.
- Fisher, Fred L. Prayer in the New Testament. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964.
- Geldenhuis, Noryal. Commentary on the Gospel of Luke. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951.
- The Greek New Testament. Ed. by Kurt Aland, et. al. New York: Limited Bible Societies, 1968.
- Guthrie, Donald. New Testament Introduction. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970.
- Jeremias, Joachim. The Prayers of Jesus. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.
- Kelly, J. N. D. A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969.

- Kelly, J. N. D. A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1963.
- Kittel, Gerhard and Friedrich, Gerhard, eds. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. 9 Vols. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964-74.
- Lenski, R. C. H. The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel. Columbus, OH: The Wartburg Press, 1943.
- Lenski, R. C. H. The Interpretation of St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospels. Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934.
- Lenski, R. C. H. The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James. Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938.
- Liddell, Henry Georg and Scott, Robert. A Greek-English Lexicon. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.
- Mayor, Joseph B. The Epistle of St. James. New York: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1897.
- M'Neile, Alan Hugh. The Gospel According to St. Matthew. New York: Macmillan and Co., LTD, 1957.
- Morris, Leon. The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957.
- Moulton, W. F. and Geden, A. S. A Concordance to the Greek Testament, 4th edition. Edinburgh, England: T. & T. Clark, 1970.
- The New American Standard Bible. Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, Inc., 1971.
- Novum Testamentum Graece. Edited by Eberhard Nestle. London: United Bible Societies, 1927.
- The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha (R. S. V.). Edited by Bruce Metzger. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Pieper, Francis. Christian Dogmatics. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1953.
- Plass, Ewald M. What Luther Says. Vol. 2. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1959.
- Polhill, John B. "The Life-Situation of the Book of James," Review and Exposition 66 (Fall 1969):369-378.
- Robertson, A. T. Word Pictures in the New Testament. Vol. 6: The General Epistles and the Revelation of John. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933.

- Ropes, James Hardy. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916.
- Sanger, Harold S. "The Literary Character of the Book of James," Review and Expositor 66 (Fall 1969):379-389.
- Spear, Wayne A. The Theology of Prayer. Pittsburgh, PA: The Board of Education and Publication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1974.
- Stagg, Frank. "An Analysis of the Book of James," Review and Expositor 66 (Fall 1969):365-368.
- Stagg, Frank. "Exegetical Themes in James 1 & 2," Review and Expositor 66 (Fall 1969):391-402.
- Swete, Henry Barclay. Commentary on Revelation. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1977.
- Tappert, Theodore G., ed. and trans. The Book of Concord. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959.
- Townsend, Michael J. "James 4:1-4: A Warning Against Zealotry?" Expository Times 87 (April 1976):211-213.
- Wilkinson, John. "Healing in the Epistle of James," Scottish Journal of Theology 24 (August 1971):326-345.
- Westcott, Brooke Foss. The Gospel According to St. John. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954.
- Westcott, Brooke Foss. The Epistle to the Hebrews. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951.
- Westcott, Brooke Foss. The Epistles of St. John. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960.