**Scripture Reading: James 1:1-8**

**Focus Verse: James 1:1**

***A Servant of God***

There are at least three men named James in the New Testament. Only two of those men could possibly be considered as the author of this important letter. Since the apostle named James had already died a martyr’s death by the time this letter was written, we can safely conclude that this “James” was the oldest of the half-brothers of Jesus. We believe that he was the oldest of the other sons of Mary and Joseph because he was listed first in Matthew 13:55. We know that he was not always a believer in Jesus as the Messiah (John 7:5). Isn’t it amazing that this man who had once rejected Jesus to be the One who was sent from the Father later became one of the earliest leaders in the church? This man, who had once rejected the deity of Christ, now believed in Him and referred to himself as “a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” He was one of the individuals to whom Christ personally appeared after the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7) and Paul once referred to him as a “pillar” of the church (Galatians 2:9). Our verses end today with James commenting on the “double-minded” man. He died for his faith about 12 years after he wrote this book of the Bible. It seems that he had found the kind of faith that put all of his doubts about Jesus behind him.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Never** give up on people! **Believe** that God can do a mighty work in the lives of your unbelieving friends and family members. **Pray** for the salvation of someone you know today and **ask** God to give you opportunities to share your faith with them.

**Scripture Reading: James 1:9-18**

**Focus Verse: James 1:12**

***The Test***

In our focus verse, James speaks of those who are “tried” (KJV) or stands “the test” (NIV). There are two primary views about this “testing” that James mentioned here. Some believe that this is speaking about the time that a believers’ work will be tried, or tested, by the Lord (1 Cor. 3:13) and that the “crown” that James mentions here represents the rewards of those who faithfully served God even in the face of persecution. Others believe that the “crown” that James had in mind was about the blessings that God would pour out upon His faithful in this lifetime. I do not find it difficult to believe that the Holy Spirit had some of both in mind when He inspired James to write these wonderful words! There is a great “blessedness” that accompanies those who serve the Lord faithfully in this life and the promise of an even greater “blessedness” that will follow in eternity. The key thing to remember is that this promise of rewards – whether in the *here* or the *hereafter* – is made to those who “endure” (KJV) or “persevere” (NIV) through the many temptations that are faced in life.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Refuse** to allow trials and temptations to stop you! **Seek** God’s strength to see you through the tough times! **Enjoy** the “blessedness” that accompanies those who serve God on a “Whatever You Want” basis! **Pray** for and **encourage** someone who is experiencing trials today.

**Scripture Reading: James 1:19-26**

**Focus Verses: James 1:26 & 27**

***Is Our Religion Real?***

James spoke of those who “seem to be” (KJV) or “considers himself” (NIV) religious. The word “religious” there refers to good things like giving, praying, church attendance, and other things that we have learned to anticipate in the lives of those who follow Christ. The word “seem” indicates that there may be those who do things that a Christian should do and yet not really be what a Christian should be. James offers a three-fold test to apply to our religion so that we can be sure that it is the real thing. The first test of true religion is a *controlled tongue* (verse 26). Every believer is responsible to “bridle” (KJV) or to “keep a tight rein” (NIV) on his tongue. The second test is a *compassionate heart* (verse 27). Genuine Christians are marked by a genuine concern for people in need such as the fatherless and widows, especially when these folks are in “affliction” (KJV) or “distress” (NIV). The third test is a *consecrated life* (verse 27). A sincere follower of Christ truly desires to keep himself “unspotted” (KJV) or from “being polluted” (NIV) by the world.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Ask** the tough questions! Do your *words* and your *works* provide sufficient evidence to indicate to others that you are a genuine Christian? Is your religion real?

**Scripture Reading: James 2:1-9**

**Focus Verses: James 2:8**

***The Royal Law***

James 1:1 identified the target audience of this letter to be the “twelve tribes” or the ancestors of Jacob’s sons. As such, these Jewish readers would have no problem understanding what James was referring to when he mentioned, “The royal law.” This law was clearly identified in Leviticus 19:18: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In Matthew 22:39, Jesus clearly stated that this “royal law” was the second highest priority for all mankind. The Jews understood that the first four commandments (Exodus 20) had to do with a right relationship (love) with God. When they loved God, they would be able to fulfill what they considered to be the “royal law,” that being to love their fellow man and to exhibit that love by treating their fellow man in the ways that were commanded in the final six commandments. Paul admonished us to owe no man any debt but love and reminded us that we have fulfilled the law when we love our fellow man (Romans 13:8). Take a few moments and review Romans 13:9-10 and note the commandments that are referenced there. It is clear that the “royal law” is based upon our loving others with a “royal love.”

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Practice** the Golden Rule in all of your relationships. **Realize** that much can be discovered about the way that we love God by observing the way that we treat others. Always **remember** to *think and pray* before you *speak and act* and there will be a greater probability that people will see the royal law lived out in your life.

**Scripture Reading: James 2:10-17**

**Focus Verse: James 2:12**

***The Royal Treatment***

Since believers are encouraged to *employ* the *royal law* in their lives, an outgrowth of such will be that those we encounter, and to whom we minister, will *enjoy* the *royal treatment*. If we are to succeed in living out the royal law, then we will have to remember to watch how we “speak” and “do” (KJV) or how we “speak and act” (NIV). If we are to avoid the “respect of persons” (KJV) or “favoritism” (NIV) that is mentioned in James 2:1, then we must pay careful attention to what is said in James 2:12! We must learn to judge others as we would desire that God judge us, that being “by the law of liberty” (KJV) or “the law that gives freedom” (NIV). This judgment is not about the determination of our eternal destiny, but about the rewards that will be assigned to us in heaven. This verse encourages us to treat others with the same kind of grace and mercy that we ourselves have been treated by God. When we do this, we will treat all people with courtesy, compassion, and consistency. Every person who comes to God’s house should be treated as we would want them to treat us.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Welcome** people into our fellowship and services. **Greet** a new person every time you see them and let them know how happy you are that they are in the services or a part of our church body. **Treat** every person the way that you would want a church to treat you.

**Scripture Reading: James 2:18-26**

**Focus Verse: James 2:18**

***Faith You Can “See”***

There is a great difference in the person who makes a *profession* of having faith and the person who actually has the *possession* of faith (see James 2:14). The difference is found in the fact that the one person has a lot to *say* *about* faith and another has a lot to *show* *as a result of having it*. James clearly says that we can “show” our faith to others through the “works” (KJV) or “deeds” (NIV) that should be an outgrowth of Christ living in us and our living out our new life in Him. The Greek word that is translated “show” in our focus verse is a word that means “to expose to the eyes” or “to give evidence or proof of something.” James says that there is a way for us to make our faith “visible” to those around us. He says that we can exhibit our faith to others by exercising the spiritual gifts which Christ has so graciously bestowed upon us. Every day should be “show and tell” day for the believer!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Seek** out ways and opportunities to make the love of Christ visible to others through kind words or deeds. **Review** James 1:12 and **remember** to “speak *and* act” (NIV). When it comes to sharing spiritual truth, we must constantly remind ourselves that we live in a world of visual learners! **Do** something kind for someone today and **give** Christ all of the credit!

**Scripture Reading: James 3:1-8**

**Focus Verse: James 3:8**

***“No Man” = “No Exceptions”***

There are some “no man” statements that are made in the Bible to which there are no exceptions. For instance, Jesus said that “No man” (KJV) or “No one” (NIV) “can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). In that case the Lord was speaking to those who thought it possible to serve God and money. He clearly stated that it was impossible to do both. People have been forever trying to prove themselves to be the exception to that rule ever since, but with no success. The same is true about the tongue. The Holy Spirit clearly declares that “no man” can tame the tongue because it is “evil” and full of “poison.” If we choose to live in a state of denial about this inherent weakness, then we will have to live in constant denial about what we have said or, at least, what we meant by it. Sometimes we are all guilty of saying too much – or speaking too soon – about a matter. None of us can afford to trust our tongues to always speak in words or tones that best exhibit the Christ that lives in us. Earlier, in James 1:19, we were reminded to be “slow to speak,” and that by doing so, we would also be “slow to wrath” (KJV) or “slow to become angry” (NIV).

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Learn** to *excuse* yourself from certain conversations and you will be less likely to have to make *excuses* for the things that you say. **Confess** to God when you sin against Him and others by allowing your tongue to escape its bridle. **Make amends** when you can and determine to **exercise** Christian caution before speaking.

**Scripture Reading: James 3:9-18**

**Focus Verse: James 3:17**

***Some “Speech” Therapy***

There is an important lesson in today’s verses that may make more difference in the effectiveness of our ministries than any other one thing mentioned in the Bible. This important lesson reminds us that, since the tongue cannot be *controlled*, then it most definitely needs to be *cleansed*! Our focus verse provides some important information about the kind of wise speaking that can be a blessing to all whom we encounter. First, we are to consider the *source* of wise speaking. It is to be “from above” (KJV) or “from heaven” (NIV). Then we are to consider the *sincerity* of our speaking. It is to be “First of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere” (NIV). We will not receive this kind of “speech therapy” from anywhere but heaven! We cannot fill our minds with what we see on network television or hear on secular radio stations and expect to speak the way that God *desires* us to speak or the way that the world *needs* us to speak! When our hearts and minds are filled with God’s Word, then our conversations will be found to be a blessing to others.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Refuse** to repeat anything before you carefully **consider** the source! Before speaking, **ask** yourself: “Who am I quoting here?” “What kind of person speaks this way?” When we speak the language of heaven we are speaking a language of love that everyone can clearly understand.

**Scripture Reading: James 4**

**Focus Verse: James 4:7**

***Submit vs. Resist***

In all of the months that I have been prayerfully selecting a focus verse from our daily devotional readings, today’s verses represented what might have been the greatest challenge thus far. This is a powerful chapter in the New Testament and it is filled with great truths that can equip any believer to walk more fully for Christ. The word translated “submit” in our focus verse means “to place one’s self under the authority or administration of another.” It came from a military term that described the arranging of troops under a supreme commander. The word translated “resist” is the same word that is translated “withstand” (KJV) or “to stand your ground” (NIV) in Ephesians 6:13. In that verse we are told to put on the “armor of God” so that we might be able to “withstand” or “resist” the evil one. It is important to note the order that James places on these two important commands. We are first to submit to God. Then we are to resist the devil. There is no way to live victoriously *for* Christ without first surrendering our lives *to* Christ. If we will submit to Him, He will equip us to face our foe without giving ground.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Refuse** to lose the battle because you offered no resistance. Don’t allow the devil to win by default! **Commit** to daily Bible reading and prayer and **ask** God to equip you to stand your ground against Satan and his devilish tricks.

**Scripture Reading: James 5:1-11**

**Focus Verse: James 5:9**

***Here Comes The Judge!***

James closes his powerful letter with some strong admonitions about how the second coming of Christ should affect the way that believers live and think. When he tells his readers that the “Judge is standing at the door” (NIV) he is reminding them of the fact that Jesus could return at any moment and that every believer will soon be standing before Him. Because of that, James urged his readers to do several things. First, he urged them to *prioritize* their values (verses 1-6). Christians should not place high values on perishable things like fine clothes and precious metals. All of these things will someday corrode and rot away. Next, he urged them to be *patient* in times of trial and affliction (verses 7-11). It may surprise you to learn that this is the only place in the New Testament where Job is mentioned. The soon coming of our Lord should remind all of us to take our eyes off of the things of this world and to put our eyes on Jesus Christ. By doing so, we will be able to see our way through even the most difficult situations. The word translated “patience” comes from two Greek words that mean “long” and “tempered.” This term was often translated “long fused” in other Greek documents.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Decide** to be a “long fused” Christian. **Refuse** to be short-tempered and impatient with others. **Look** to Christ as your example and **ask** Him to teach you how to be more like Him when it comes to relationships and dealings with others.

**Scripture Reading: James 5:12-20**

**Focus Verse: James 5:12**

***Here Comes the Judge (Part Two)***

Today’s verses continue James’ closing remarks on how the soon coming of Christ should affect the way Christians live and interact with others. As he continues to stress these important points he mentions that believers should *be* *pure* in their speaking (verse 12). James states that those who tell the truth do not have to support their words with “swearing” or “oaths” (KJV). He then states that believers who live in light of the soon coming of Christ will *be prayerful* in their trials (verses 13-18). James clearly believed that Christians would see times when they were “afflicted” (KJV) or “in trouble” (NIV). He also clearly believed that Christians would encounter sickness and disease. He closes his letter by encouraging all believers to *be persistent* in their witnessing to others (verses 19-20).

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Thank** God for the commitment of the New Testament writers. **Pray** for someone who is experiencing sickness or trials right now and let them know that you are praying for them. **Encourage** a fellow believer today.

**Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 1:1-12**

**Focus Verse: 1 Peter 1:3**

***Hope***

Peter addressed his letter to believers who were “strangers.” These people were strangers *politically* because they had no homeland of their own and they were living under the rule of other governments. They were strangers *spiritually* because they were now citizens of Heaven who no longer fit into this world and its system. He also states that his readers were a “scattered” people. The word that is translated “scattered” in Peter’s opening remarks is a word that refers to the way that a farmer might sometimes scatter his seed by tossing it into a strong wind and letting that wind carry it out across his fields. In spite of this, Peter begins his letter to them talking about hope! He states that the believer’s hope is to be a *living* hope (verse 3). Our hope is a living hope because it is placed in a living Savior! Peter also states that the believer’s hope is a *lasting* hope (verses 4-5). Our inheritance is not of this world and, therefore, will never become corrupted or fade away. He closes with a reminder that the believer’s hope is a *loving* hope (verse 8). Many of the new Christians to whom Peter was writing had become believers after Christ’s return to heaven and they had never seen him personally. Yet, because of their love for Him, they persevered through the many trials and afflictions that were associated with being a follower of Jesus Christ during New Testament times.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Be** a hopeful person and practice sharing your hope with others. **Speak** to someone about Christ today and let them know how much joy He brings to your life. **Refuse** to become discouraged when your plans are “scattered” and things do not go as you desired. **Trust** God to be at work in your life and that He will bring about that which is best for you and your family.

**Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 1:13-25**

**Focus Verses: 1 Peter 1:15 & 16**

***Holiness***

The *hope* that lives in the believer’s heart should be their greatest motivation to *holiness*. Since we know that God would not command us to be something that it would be impossible for us to be, we have to understand that the word “holiness” does not mean to be sinless and morally perfect. In the New Testament, this word is used to describe those who have separated themselves, in full devotion, to the Lord. Verse 14 helps us to understand holiness when it tells us that we are to be “obedient children.” Since we are God’s children, we should bear some characteristics that resemble our Father! Verse 17 reminds us that our “work” will one day be judged by God. This fact alone should be enough to motivate us to live lives that are dedicated to God. However, the fact that we have been redeemed by “the precious blood of Christ” (verse 19) should be the greatest motivation to live holy lives and to follow Christ completely.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Accept** God’s challenge to holiness. Do not allow the fact that we are not perfect to keep us from making our best effort to be a fair representation of our Heavenly Father. No one expects to bat 1.ooo but that does not stop them from trying to get a hit every time that they come to bat!

**Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2:1-8**

**Focus Verses: 1 Peter 2:1**

***Harmony***

Three of the first topics that Peter addressed to his readers were *hope*, *holiness*, and *harmony*. You can see that the Holy Spirit is leading Peter to lay a solid foundation for successful Christian living early in this letter. Hope leads to holiness and holiness leads to harmony. The first word of our focus verse (“wherefore” KJV and “therefore” NIV) definitely connects what Peter is about to say now to what he has been saying in the first chapter. Because we are God’s hope-filled, holy children, we are instructed to be “laying aside” (KJV) or to “rid ourselves” (NIV) of malice and all of the evil words and ways that accompany it. When believers are living in hope and pursuing holiness, they will feel out of sync with those who are angry and speaking evil, slanderous things about others. You have to believe that these were not easy words for Peter to pen. He, more than anyone else, knew that he had failed Christ during His last days and that his speech had certainly not been what one would have expected. He had boasted of *great faithfulness* only to become a *great failure*. However, our preaching cannot be based on our lives, but on the life that Christ lived before us. That life was not a life of “guile” (KJV) or “deceit” (NIV) and there was not one ounce of hypocrisy in the One who died for us. It is only when we stop looking at others and look to Christ that we will have true harmony in our churches.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Ask** God to forgive you for hurtful speaking and divisive words. **Seek** forgiveness from others, if necessary, and be willing to forgive those who have hurt you – even without an apology. Politely **separate yourself** from conversations and Christians who are destructive and divisive. **Refuse** to repeat gossip and slander.

**Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2:9-17**

**Focus Verse: 1 Peter 2:9**

***A Royal Priesthood***

Earlier in this devotional guide we read where James spoke of the royal law that required that we give others what we referred to as the royal treatment. Now we have Peter describing those who are followers of Christ as “a royal priesthood.” Earlier, in 2:5, he referred to believers as “a holy priesthood.” Peter is closing the opening remarks of his letter with some simple reminder of who we are. No believer should ever lose sight of the fact that we (Jewish and Gentile believers together) are a chosen people – just as assuredly as Israel was God’s elect and chosen people in the Old Testament message. We have been chosen to be “a holy nation,” meaning, that we, as believers, have been set apart for this royal service to our Lord. At Sinai, God told Moses to tell the people, “You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). The church now has the privilege of being “God’s people” who have been authorized to “show forth” (KJV) or “declare” God’s praises.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Remember** who you are! **Never** forget the price that God paid to be able to declare you as His chosen. **Live** for eternal purposes and **share** some praise with someone that you meet today.

**Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2:18-25**

**Focus Verse: 1 Peter 2:21**

***In His Steps***

When I was a very young Christian, my pastor gave me a book entitled “In His Steps” by Charles Sheldon. He had everyone in our little youth group reading this book and it had a powerful impact on our lives. Although Sheldon was not the first to use the phrase, “What would Jesus do?” he added it as a subtitle to his book and the phrase became what it is today. Unfortunately, his publisher failed to register the copyright in the proper form, and Sheldon soon saw his book, and this coined phrase, become public domain. As a result of that mistake, the author received very few royalties on a book that has now sold over 30 million copies. However, that might seem like meager fair to the eternal reward that continuously flows to him in heaven every time someone reads his book and decides to walk in the steps of the Savior. Too many people pluck this verse out of its context and preach beautiful messages about following Christ. But, if you read this verse in context, you will soon see that the call to follow the example of Christ – to “follow his steps” – is a calling associated with suffering and great sacrifice. The “example” that Christ left us was one of a suffering servant who freely gave His life for the good of others.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Read** the Bible and learn how you can truly follow in the very footsteps of Jesus. **Seek** to serve others with the appropriate heart attitude. **Be kind** in your relationships. **Accept** whatever path God sets forth for you and walk it with faith and endurance. At life’s end, you will never regret one moment that you spent serving Jesus!

**Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 3:1-12**

**Focus Verse: 1 Peter 3:1**

***Without Words***

Peter was the only apostle who the Bible ever mentions being married, and, as far as we know, he was the only one of the original 12 who was. It doesn’t take a long look at this man’s life to know that he wasn’t perfect. So, he is not speaking here as the perfect husband, demanding submission from his own wife and of all women to their husbands. He is using the voluntary submission of a wife to her husband to help his readers understand how we, as believers, should live in submission to Christ and those to whom He has called us to serve. The phrase, “Likewise” (KJV) or “In the same way” (NIV) refers back to the kind of submission that Peter said believers should have to governmental authorities (2:13-17) and that slaves should have to their masters (2:18-25). When a Christian woman lives her life as God commands, God uses that woman to preach a message “without words” that could lead to the salvation of her husband and others. All of us have been called to preach this kind of sermon. We are preaching to others every day as we live out our lives and follow the example of Christ.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Ask** yourself, “If my life were a book, what title would others give it?” Never underestimate the impact that your life has on others. **Be intentional** in your walk and see every situation as a ministry opportunity. A life that convinces others that Christ is real will always be a “best seller!”

**Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 3:13-22**

**Focus Verse: 1 Peter 3:14**

***Happy***

I cannot count the times that a counseling session has included the comment, “I just want to be happy!” Our English word (“happy”) comes from a word that means to have “good luck or favorable circumstances.” As such, when many people say that they want to be happy, they are saying that I want to live among my own designed, desired circumstances. For Peter, and those who heard him speak, they knew that the word meant something different. In its original form, the word that is translated “happy” (KJV) or “blessed” (NIV) in our focus verse is a word that means “to be fully satisfied.” According to Matthew 5:3-11, the kind of “happy” that Jesus preached meant to be “fully satisfied” even when we are “poor in spirit,” or when we “mourn.” It means to be content even when we are forced to walk in meekness and when we suffer persecution. The happiness of which Jesus preached was not associated with getting what we want but in our giving what He has called us to give to the world around us. It is the kind of happiness that comes on an “even if” basis!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Review** James 1:12 and 25 and look for the word “blessed.” That is the same word that we have discussed today. In that case, the word is used to describe the person who consistently serves Christ on an *in spite o*f and not a *because of* basis. Make every effort to **be** that kind of Christian today. **Live** to *give* and not just to *get*!

**Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 4:1-11**

**Focus Verse: 1 Peter 4:8**

***Above All***

The Greek word that is translated “above” in our focus verse is translated “before” in every place that it is found in the New Testament – except for here and in James 5:12! If you were keeping score, the “Befores” would outpace the “Aboves” 44 – 2! The word comes from the little Greek word “pro” which simply means “before.” James told us that, “Above all,” we, as Christians, should *speak* truthfully, at all times and without sensing the need to support what we say by swearing or making an oath. Peter now tells us that, “Above all,” we should “have fervent charity” (KJV) or to “love each other deeply” (NIV). James reminded us that, “Above all,” or “before anything else,” we should be careful to *talk* like a Christian should talk,” while Peter reminded us that, “Above all, or “before anything else,” we should be careful to *walk* like a Christian should walk!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Review** James 5:20 and you will see that the same word that is translated “hide” (KJV) or “cover” (NIV) there is the same word that is used to describe what love can do when it is considered “before” or “above all” when we are speaking to, or about, others. Christian love does not *disclose* the faults and imperfections of others but *disposes* gossip and slander like yesterday’s garbage.

**Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 4:12-19**

**Focus Verse: 1 Peter 4:12**

***Trials***

Peter says some powerful things about trials in these verses. Even though I have selected verse 12 as our focus verse, I am going to comment on several of our verses today by providing you with a simple outline of this passage that God gave to me many years ago. I have preached these verses many times and in many places since I was a very young man. First, God tells us that trials are *planned* (verse 12). It is not a “strange or uncommon thing for believers to experience trials. It never has been, and it never shall be, an easy walk when we choose to follow after Christ. Second, God tells us that trials are purposeful (verse 14). If we are called to walk the path of persecution, then God will use that path to bring “blessing” into our lives and to display his “glory” to others. Third, God tells us that trials are *precious* (verse 16) because they afford us an opportunity to “glorify” (KJV) or to “praise” (NIV) God as we suffer unashamedly on His behalf. Because of these things, God tells us, then, that trials can be *pleasant* (verse 13). In that verse we are told to “rejoice” in our trials. And why should this be? We can choose to rejoice in difficult times because God tells us that facing trials is a way of *participating* in the ministry of Christ (verse 13).

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Look back** at some past experience and see the good that God brought into your life during some time of trial. **Thank** God for such experiences and **praise** Him through every tough situation. **Seek** out an opportunity to **testify** to someone of the goodness of God today.

**Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 5**

**Focus Verses: 1 Peter 5:8 & 9**

***Our Adversary***

Peter closes this letter with three important exhortations to his readers. First, he exhorts them to *be faithful* (verses 1-4). These first verses are addressed primarily to the *pastors*, but he extends the same exhortation to the *people,* as well. Notice that Peter emphasizes the fact that people should serve the Lord “not by constraint” (KJV) but “because (they) are willing” (NIV). Christians should be faithful to the Lord because they *desire* to be and not because they *have* to be. Then, Peter exhorts them to *be humble* (verses 5-7). He tells his readers to “be clothed” (KJV) with humility. Most believe that this is a direct reference to the way that the Lord clothed himself as a servant and washed the feet of the disciples. I am sure that Peter, nor any of the other apostles, was ever able to forget that evening or the Lord’s humble service to them. Last, Peter exhorted them to *be watchful* (verses 8-11). He warns them that Satan is their “adversary” (KJV) or “enemy” (NIV). This word was used to describe the prosecutors who attempted to accuse someone in a court of law. In Genesis, Satan appeared as a serpent to *deceive* and in 1 Peter Satan appears as a lion that *devours*. Believers in our day are to resist him in the same way as believer’s of Peter’s day – “In the faith!”

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Resist** Satan in the faith! Use God’s Word as a shield of faith to deflect his deadly blows. **Refuse** to underestimate the devil or overestimate yourself. Avoid Satan's traps by staying in the Word and on your knees!

**Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 1:1-11**

**Focus Verse: 2 Peter 1:3**

***Everything We Need***

Knowledge is a prominent theme in Peter’s second letter to all believers. Verse 2 speaks of the “knowledge of God.” We will then read the word “knowledge” again in verses 3, 5, 6, and 8. This term does not refer to what *God knows* but to what *we know about God*. Peter states that God has given us “all things” (KJV) or “everything we need” (NIV) to live godly lives through what He has taught us through His Son. Later in this letter Peter will warn of false teachers who will rise up from “among” the people (2:1). These words of wisdom would serve to prepare the people to avoid becoming involved with any teacher whose teachings did not follow the teachings of Christ. There is no new wisdom or new thought that can improve upon that which the Holy Spirit has already provided us. Let the Bible be your devotional guide and be a prolific reader of God’s Word. You may not understand everything that you read, but everything that you read will be preparing you to face the trials of the day and to live victoriously over the enemy.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Read** God’s Word every day and **pray** for knowledge and understanding. As the old preachers used to say, “If there is dust on your Bible there is probably dirt in your life!” As you read God’s Word, **ask** Him to show you things that will feed your spiritual needs. **Remember** that “What you do with the Bible determines what God can do with you!”

**Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 1:12-21**

**Focus Verse: 2 Peter 1:21**

***The “Origin” of the Bible***

Our focus verse contains an important statement about the Bible. Peter tells us that the Bible “came not” (KJV) or “never had its origin” (NIV) in the will of man. The Bible came to us through men that God “moved” (KJV) or “carried along” (NIV) by the Holy Spirit. By this, Peter is saying that he believed that the Bible was *dutifully written* by the *hands* of men but *divinely inspired* by the *heart* of God. This statement follows the important teaching of verse 20, where we are told that no part of the Scripture “is of” (KJV) or “came about” (NIV) by the prophet’s own interpretation. In other words, Peter is saying that the Bible is not about *what men think* but, rather, it is about what *God says*! This echoes Paul’s statement in 2 Timothy 3:16 where he said that the Bible was “given by inspiration of God” (KJV) or “God breathed” (NIV). Every Christian must come to a place of certainty about what the Bible *is* before they can ever come to any certainly about what the Bible *says*.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Believe** that the Bible is God’s divine Word to man and **treat** it like a personal letter from God. **Organize** and **prioritize** your life and schedule so that there can be adequate time given to the reading of God’s Word every day.

**Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 2:1-11**

**Focus Verse: 2 Peter 2:1**

***False Teachers***

Peter warned his readers that there would be false teachers “among” them just like there were false prophets among the people of God in Old Testament times. However, he helps us to understand that there is a difference between false *teaching* and false *teachers*. A false teacher is not someone who misinterprets a Scripture or is in error of his personal understanding of the Word. In Acts 18:24-28, we read about Apollos teaching a false (incorrect) doctrine (the baptism of John), but he was not referred to as a false teacher. False teachers act *intentionally* and not out of *ignorance*. False teachers know the truth, but turn and twist it to their own advantage for their own personal gain. They may be motivated by personal greed (verse 3), personal glory, or both! Peter warns that they will bring in “damnable” (KJV) or “destructive” (NIV) heresies – even to the extent that they will deny the Lord for Who He was and Who He should be in our lives. Back in 1:16, Peter mentioned the “cleverly invented stories” (NIV) that he had refused to follow and promote. There is one story to tell and that is the story of Jesus! Any teacher who desires his own glory over the glory of Christ will soon find himself in a very bad place.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Serve** the Lord and seek only His glory. **Use** God’s Word to lift Christ up before men and watch Him keep His promise to draw all men to Himself. **Remember** that we have nothing to offer anyone but Jesus – and that Jesus is everything that they need!

**Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 2:12-22**

**Focus Verse: 2 Peter 2:17**

***Wells without Water***

In our focus verse, Peter declares false teachers to be like “wells” (KJV) or “springs” (NIV) “without water.” You can imagine how devastating it would be to come to what appeared to be a well filled with refreshing water only to find that it was merely a dry hole! Such would be the case for those who followed after these false teachers, Peter said. These false teachers would make many glittering promises but would not be able to produce one drop of spiritual water for their hearers. They would be like “clouds” (KJV) or “mists” (NIV) that *promised* rain but never *provided* it. Their teachings may have appeared to be truthful and helpful, but they were given more for the benefit of the teacher than the pupil. In verse 18, Peter goes on to say that they speak with “swelling” (KJV) or “boastful” (NIV) words of vanity that appeal more to the desires of the flesh than the spirit.

**Prayer Emphasis**

* **Be cautious** about the kind of teaching and preaching that you hear. Even more importantly, exercise caution in the kind of teaching that you provide for others. **Remove** yourself from the equation at every opportunity and try to **speak** in ways that glorify only the Lord and edify the spiritual lives of your family and friends.

**Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 3:1-9**

**Focus Verse: 2 Peter 3:1**

***Some More “Be’s”***

If you recall, 1 Peter 5 opened with three “Be” exhortations. Now we find Peter provided some more important “Be” exhortations to his readers. Two of these commands are found in the first nine verses of the chapter and two more are found in the last nine. First, Peter exhorts the people to “*be mindful of”* (KJV)or “recall” (NIV)the things that they had been taught from the Old Testament preachers, as well as the Lord and the preachers that followed Him. This exhortation is closely connected to Peter’s earlier warnings against false teachers who teach things purely for their own gain and benefit (verse 3). The only way that these young Christians could avoid the pitfalls of false teaching was to have “pure minds” (KJV) or “wholesome thinking” (NIV). To do that they would have to “*be not ignorant of”* (KJV) or to “not forget” (NIV) that the Lord’s day would soon be upon them and that they should focus on what they have learned from their true, God-sent teachers. Every believer should live every day as if it would be the day that the Lord will return and our lives and ministries on this earth will be ended. At that time there will be no one to scoff at what we believe or to mock us as we seek to live for the honor and glory of Christ. However, there will be no more opportunity for us to share the gospel of Christ with our unsaved friends and loved ones.

**Prayer Emphasis**

* **Speak** of Christ to someone today. **Mention** Him and all that He has done for you in conversation. If you have an opportunity, **share** with someone about the peace and comfort that your faith in Christ provides you as you live through these last days.

**Scripture Reading: 2 Peter 3:10-18**

**Focus Verse: 2 Peter 3:14**

***The “Be’s” (Continued)***

Peter now exhorts his readers to *“be diligent”* (KJV) or “to make every effort” (NIV) to be ready for the day of the Lord’s return. The return of Christ is a great incentive for godly living. It was for the earliest believers and it should be for every believer today. Why should we live for this world, and all that it offers us, when it is all going to perish at the end? We know that the Lord’s promises are true and we, therefore, remain faithful and diligent to His teachings. These true teachings will allow us to live “in peace” (KJV) or “at peace” (NIV) with Christ and “without spot” (KJV) or “spotless” in this world. Finally, Peter gives his last “Be” exhortation to his readers. He closes his letter by commanding us to *“beware”* (KJV) or to “be on your guard” (NIV) against false teaching and wayward living that would distract us from the task at hand. Peter’s final command to us is that, even though we are surrounded by false teaching and wrong living, we are to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Times may “be” tough, but we can still “be” everything that God desires us to “be” if we keep our eyes on Jesus!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Commit** your life to diligent, faithful service to Christ. **Read again** the final verse in this powerful lesson and note that it takes “grace *and* knowledge” to accomplish that goal. By grace we are *saved* and by knowledge we *grow*.

**Scripture Reading: 1 John 1**

**Focus Verse: 1 John 1:7**

***The First Test of Fellowship***

In today’s reading, verse six spoke of those who walk in darkness while verse seven spoke of those who walk in light. Being in fellowship, or in harmony with God, was important to the early believers and it should be important to those of us who serve Christ today. Our focus verse includes an “if,” which is a clear indication that it is entirely possible for a believer to be disobedient to this command and out of fellowship with God. John begins this important letter by providing a three-fold test for true fellowship. First, he says that true fellowship is evidenced by *walking in light*. We have fellowship with God when we come to Him and allow Him to conform (shape) us to His image. Far too often, people try to make God conform to their little world and their lifestyle when God is not the One who needs to change! Being in fellowship with God does not mean that we are perfect and sinless. Being in fellowship with God means that we are accepted *by* Him even when not everything we do or say is acceptable *to* Him.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Seek** to walk in the light that God gives you through His Word. **Believe** that God desires to lead you down a pleasant and acceptable path and walk that path in faith and boldness. **Ask** God to mold you to His way of thinking and to show you, clearly, the way that He would have you go. **Mention** the “Light” to someone that you see today.

**Scripture Reading: 1 John 2:1-17**

**Focus Verses: 1 John 2:9 & 10**

***The Second “Test” of Fellowship***

The second test to true fellowship with the Father is *walking in love*. Our focus verses clearly indicate that one must first be walking in the *light* if they are to walk in *love*. When we are walking in the light, we will find that we are best able to walk in love. True fellowship with God is best evidenced by our being able to fellowship with one another. Notice that verse nine begins with “He that” (KJV) or “Anyone” (NIV). This is yet another one of God’s rules to which no person is the exception. If we “say” that we are in the Light, but fail to exhibit Christian love to our fellow believers, then we are still in darkness. However, if we love our brother, then we are walking in accordance with God’s light and can walk without stumbling. Satan’s greatest desire is to cause us to fail in our relationships. First, he would have us fail in our relationship with God. If we do that, he knows that we will certainly fail in our relationships with people. It is not likely that a person who truly loves God will live without loving his fellow believers.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Express** Christian love to someone today. **Practice** kindness – *verbally* and *visibly –* to someone today. **Allow** God’s Word (the Light) to teach you how to love others. **Refuse** to be a source of discord in God’s family.

**Scripture Reading: 1 John 2:18-29**

**Focus Verse: 1 John 2:28**

***The Third “Test” of Fellowship***

John’s third test of true fellowship is to *walk in the Lord*. In our focus verse, he urges us to “abide” (KJV) or to “continue” (NIV) *in Him*. This important Greek verb occurs 10 times in verses of 1 John 2:6-27 and 23 times in 1 John. John was committed to teaching his followers to find their being in Christ. Of the 112 times this Greek verb is used in the Scriptures, 66 of those times it was John that wrote it! John emphasized that believers must “live/abide/continue” *in* *Him* and that they must allow Him to “live/abide/continue” *within* *them*. We must never forget *Who* it is that *enables us* to walk in the light and *empowers us* to walk in love. Our ability to have fellowship with God – and our fellow believers – is not something that comes from our own strength or natural abilities. We can only fulfill these supernatural demands through the Supernatural One who lives within us. The suggestion that a believer might be “ashamed” at the coming of the Lord is not referring to loss of salvation. It is referring to being ashamed of our unwillingness to walk in His light and love.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Keep** things right in your relationship with God by reading His Word and walking in the light that it provides you. **Realize** that it is not possible to be right in your relationship with others if you are not right in your relationship with God. **Restore** the joy and fellowship to some human relationship while there is still time to do so.

**Scripture Reading: 1 John 3:1-10**

**Focus Verse: 1 John 3:9**

***The First “Test” of True Sonship***

While the first half of this brief, but important, letter dealt with *fellowship*, the second half will deal with *sonship*. John will now discuss some evidences that will mark those who are genuine followers of Christ. The first indicator of genuine faith mentioned is obedience. Our focus verse speaks of those who have been “born” of God. God has a dual claim to ownership of believers. He is our *Creator* because He originally created us in His image and He is our *Procreator* (Father) because He has set forth His plan to have us be born into His family. When John says that those who are born of God do not commit sin, it *is* *not* saying that a Christian has lost his desire or ability to sin. What it *is* saying is that a Christian will not live in habitual sin. The phrase “he cannot sin” (KJV) is in the Greek “present tense” which denotes continuous or repeated action. John is not saying that Christians never sin, but that they do not choose to continue or remain involved in sinful activities. Sin is *inevitable*, but it does not have to be *habitual*! This phrase is translated “he cannot go on sinning” in the NIV and other translations.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* Be quick to **recognize** and **admit** that you have made a wrong turn. **Seek** God’s guidance on how to get back on the right track. **Remember**, real men will stop and ask God for directions!

**Scripture Reading: 1 John 3:11-24**

**Focus Verse: 1 John 3:23**

***The Second “Test” of True Sonship***

The second evidence of true sonship that John discussed is closely connected to the first. The first evidence was obedience and the second is made evident when we obey Christ in His command that we “love one another.” You will notice that the word “command” is found in two forms in the focus verse. First, we are commanded to “believe on the name of Jesus Christ” and to “love one another.” These words provide a very strong indication that the kind of love that should be evident among Christians is a love that comes only through a right relationship with Jesus Christ. It is impossible to have *the love of Christ* in us without first having *Christ* in us. The twofold use of the word “command” is very important. The first usage tells us that we are commanded to love one another while the second usage tells us that we are commanded to love one another “as” (or in the way) that He has commanded us to love one another. There is only one way that true Christian love can be exhibited – and that is in the way that Christ modeled it to us! True Christians love unselfishly, completely, totally, sacrificially, and unconditionally. I could have come up with more ways to describe how God loves us, and commands us to love others, but I think that you probably have a pretty good idea of what I am saying. I am sure that the Holy Spirit has spoken to all of us about this before!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Express** Christian love in word and deed today. **Refuse** to sit back and wait for an opportunity to do so – **look** for an opportunity to be unselfish and create one if necessary! Read verse 11 again and realize that this was what Christ taught His followers from the very beginning.

**Scripture Reading: 1 John 4:1-12**

**Focus Verses: 1 John 4:10**

***Propitiation***

I have urged you to not “shun” the “tion” words more than once in these devotionals. In our focus verse we are told that God sent His Son to be the “propitiation” (KJV) or “atoning sacrifice” (NIV) for our sins. The Greek word that is translated “propitiation” (KJV) is found only in this little letter of John (2:2; 4:10). It is important to understand this word if we are going to understand how God is able to love us unconditionally and save us by His grace. It is also important for us to understand this word if we are going to love others in the way that Christ has loved us and commanded us to love our fellow Christians. The word propitiation referred to a sacrifice by which God is “satisfied” or “appeased.” The only person who could make that sacrifice was the “only begotten” (KJV) or “one and only” (NIV) Son of God (verse 9). I much prefer the KJV translation over others in this verse, as well as in other verses where this phrase is found. Only the Priest who was “begotten” of God could make this perfect sacrifice for the sins of man. This sacrifice is perfect because the One who offered it was perfect. Christ came to offer Himself – the Perfect Man making the Perfect Sacrifice – for the sins of the whole world.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Realize** that not everyone *will* be saved – but **believe** that everyone *can* be saved. The perfect *Priest* came to personally make the perfect *Sacrifice* so that our sins could be “propitiated” or “atoned.”  **Decide** to be a **minister** to everyone for whom Christ made that sacrifice today and you will see opportunities to **witness** everywhere you go.

**Scripture Reading: 1 John 4:13-21**

**Focus Verse: 1 John 4:21**

***A Letter From Home***

The commandment that we have in our focus verse is said to be “from Him” (KJV) because “He has given us” (NIV) the command to love one another. There are some things that we can learn from our teachers, but this is one of the things that we can only learn from God. Even though this command comes to us through the devoted disciple John, we are to understand that this command comes directly from God. When we read the Bible, we should read it like a letter from home and treat it as a letter written by the hand, and coming from the heart, of Almighty God. The NIV inserts the word “must” in this verse because this is an imperative command from God Himself. Loving one another is not an option. It is a command. There is no *excuse* for not obeying this command because no one is *excused* from obeying it! God’s desire is that we love one another and He has diligently made it possible for us to be obedient to this divine mandate. We are enabled to show love *to* one another because we are empowered to love one another *through* Him. Love is a gift from God that often remains unopened by those to whom it is given. It is important that we allow this *present* from God to be active in our lives if we are going to be visible witnesses of His *presence* in our lives!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Allow** God to love someone through you today. **Express** Christian love to someone today by letting them know that you are praying for them and that you are there for them if they ever need a Christian friend.

**Scripture Reading: 1 John 5:1-12**

**Focus Verses: 1 John 5:11 & 12**

***Another “No Exceptions” Truth From God***

Verse 11 declares that God has given us eternal life. This means that eternal life is a present possession of the believer and not one that will be experienced only after we are in heaven. We are now the children of God – *at* this present moment and *in* this present world. Those who have the Son have this eternal life now. Those who do not have the Son do not have eternal life. We must never forget that Jesus is “*the* way” and not *a* way to God. In John 14:6 Jesus clearly said, “I am *the* way, *the* truth, and *the* life” and that “no man comes to the Father ‘but” (KJV) or ‘except’ (NIV) by Me.” For centuries, well-intentioned people have desperately tried to create exceptions to this rule by placing their hope of salvation in places (church membership) and practices (baptism and good works). However, the Bible clearly declares that salvation is found in a *Person* and not in places or practices. It is impossible for anyone to be saved by “joining the church” or doing some good work. We are saved because we have become one with Christ and we are now “joined” to Him.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Make** a personal review of your hope of salvation and **take** an inventory of your life to make sure that you have truly received Christ as your personal Savior. There is no hope of salvation apart from knowing Christ. **Find** a way to include the word “saved” in a conversation with someone today.

**Scripture Reading: 1 John 5:13-21**

**Focus Verse: 1 John 5:14**

***Confidence!***

In the closing verses of John’s letter, we find the word that is translated “confidence” a fourth, and final, time in his writings (see also 2:28; 3:21; 4:17). In fact, this is the last time that we will see this word in all of the New Testament. This is the same word that is associated with prayer in Hebrews 4:16 where we are told that we can “come boldly” (KJV) or “with confidence” (NIV) before God’s “throne of grace.” This word is used, especially in Hebrews and 1 John, to describe the confidence that any believer has when they are fulfilling a command of Christ. In this particular verse, this confidence is associated with the saint who prays “according to God’s will.” Because of this confidence, a Christian can seek God in prayer with an unwavering, fearless faith that does not hesitate to mention the needs of the hour. However, this kind of confidence is not limited to time spent in prayer. A careful look in the New Testament will reveal that this confidence can be found when any Christian is doing anything in accordance with the will of God. For example, this is the same “boldness” (KJV) or “courage” (NIV) with which Peter and John preached God’s Word in Acts 4:13, as well as the confidence that Paul displayed in his preaching in Acts 28:31.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* When we know God’s will, we can live and act in confidence. **Minister** wisely by ministering in accordance with God’s will for your life. **Realize** that Christian confidence is found when we are acting in agreement with God and His Word.

**Scripture Reading: 2 John**

**Focus Verse: 2 John, Verse 6**

***Love is a Command***

We often hear about the precious gift of love. But, while it is true that love is a spiritual gift, it is also true that it is a way of life by which all believers are commanded to live. The word that is translated “commandment” (KJV) or “command” (NIV) in today’s focus verse is the same word that Jesus used to refer to the Old Testament commandments in Matthew 5:19 and 15:3 & 6. We would all do well to learn that love is not an *option*, but an act of *obedience* to a command of God and His Son! Notice how often you see the words “walk” or “walking” in the first six verses in this little letter and see how closely *love* is associated with the way that we *live*. Then, look again to see how many times you see the word “truth” in these same verses and you will clearly see that true love is found in living in obedience to God’s Truth! Read verse three again and see how John makes this association when he says that, “Grace, mercy, peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father’s Son, will be with us in *truth* and *love*.” John saw no need to separate truth and love – and neither should we.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Believe** that, when we know the truth, we will know how to truly love. **Accept** the responsibility to love as a command from Almighty God and as an act of obedience to His will. **Refuse** to operate outside of the will of God by choosing to **express**, and **enjoy**, true Christian love in all of your relationships.

**Scripture Reading: 3 John**

**Focus Verse: 3 John, Verse 1**

***Gaius vs. Diotrophes***

Third John is actually a personal letter written to a specific Christian that lived during John’s lifetime. This letter, along with Paul’s letter to Philemon, makes up the entire collection of personal letters included in the New Testament. Notice that John refers to this man as “Beloved” (KJV) or “Dear friend” (NIV) in his salutation (verse 1) and then uses that same term of endearment again in verses 2, 5, and 11. Our focus verse is a good indicator that John practiced what he preached to others. After preaching the command to love others in his public letters to the church, he now practices loving others in his private relationship with a dear friend. Verse two gives some indication that Gaius was not doing well *physically* because John was praying for his “health.” However, that same verse gives strong indication that Gaius was prospering *spiritually* and that he was a helper to those who travelled among the churches and preached the Word of God. Compare this man to Diotrephes, who loved to “have preeminence” (KJV) or “to be first” (NIV) and who refused to be a helper to men like John and other ministers. Verse 10 clearly indicates that this one man’s selfish attitude soon *affected*, and *infected* the hearts and minds of others.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Determine** to be an encourager, and not a discourager, to those who seek to serve the Lord and His church. **Be intentional** in your love and support of ministers and ministries. Pray for someone in one of our church ministries today and let them know that you have done so.

**Scripture Reading: Jude 1-12**

**Focus Verse: Jude, Verse 1**

***Jude***

Although neither James nor Jude refer to themselves as being the half-brother of Jesus, it is commonly accepted that they were two of the brothers mentioned by name in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3 and then referred to again in John 7:3-10. Paul did not hesitate to refer to James as the Lord’s brother in Galatians 1:19 and Luke referred to Judas (Jude) in the same way in Acts 1:13 (KJV). It is obvious that these two men came to faith sometime late in the ministry of Christ and probably not until after His death and resurrection. When Luke recorded some of the names of those who met with the apostles in prayer just after the ascension and just prior to Pentecost, he noted that the Lord’s brothers were among those who waited and prayed (Acts 1:14). While it is true that there was an apostle that bore this same name, the writer of this letter never lays claim to being an apostle. A careful look at the letters of the other apostles will reveal that this was the customary thing to do. Through faith, this man who was once known as a *denier* of Christ became an ardent *defender* of Christ who wrote this letter to urge others to contend for the faith and withstand the false teachings of those who spoke “evil” (KJV) or “abusively” (NIV) about things that they did not understand (verse 10).

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Avoid** the sin of speaking presumptuously by refusing to speak on an issue before you have carefully examined it and understand it yourself. **Remember** that God’s Word of faith has been “delivered” (KJV) or “entrusted” to us. Faithfully ***declare*** and ***defend*** it at every opportunity.

**Scripture Reading: Jude 13-25**

**Focus Verse: Jude, Verse 1**

***A Servant***

Although today’s reading is from the second half of Jude, I want to conclude this devotional by referring back to a word found in the first verse of Jude, as well as the first verse of James where this devotional began. Our first and last preachers about whom we have written were brothers of the Lord who chose to refer to themselves as “servants.” Although they were half-brothers of Jesus, neither makes any mention of it nor presents any argument or claim to that status. Look at Romans 1:1 and you will see that Paul, without hesitation, immediately laid claim to being a servant *and* an apostle of Jesus Christ. As apostles, Paul, and others, acted under a *commission* *from* Christ and in *command to* His Words. However, as a servant, one acted in response to a choice of their own free will. Such was the case with James and Jude. These two men became devoted followers of the same Christ that they had once rejected and denied. You have only to read the concluding verses (verses 24-25) to get an idea of what Jude believed about Jesus now!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* I will repeat the challenge that I laid before you in the first prayer emphasis in this devotional guide. “**Never** give up on people! **Believe** that God can do a mighty work in the lives of your unbelieving friends and family members. **Pray** for the salvation of someone you know today and **ask** God to give you opportunities to share your faith with them.”