

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
James: A Sermonic Call Unto Practical Godliness
Part I: Appreciating The Author's Example Of Growing In Practical Godliness
(James 1:1)

I. Introduction

- A. Though sermonic admonitions may be hard to accept, if we know the teacher, it makes it much easier!
- B. Consider Timothy's case: Paul admonished him to continue in the things he had learned and become convinced were true, recalling his teacher, Paul, from whom he had learned them, 2 Timothy 3:14, 10-11.
- C. That admonition carried great weight for Timothy, for he was from Lystra (Acts 16:1) where Paul was once stoned and left for dead in his ministry (Acts 14:8, 19-20), an event Paul wrote that Timothy knew in 2 Timothy 3:11 which made Paul's 2 Timothy 3:14 admonition so potent for Timothy.
- D. The Epistle of James is written in a diatribe, a terse, ethical address with argument-style admonitions used to impress others of a concern (Donald Guthrie, New Bib. Com.: Rev., p. 1222), so, to **appreciate** James' **sermonic admonitions** like Timothy valued Paul's admonition, we view James' background (as follows):

II. Appreciating The Author's Example Of Growing In Practical Godliness, James 1:1.

- A. The author of the Epistle of James was the half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ (as follows):
 - 1. Only two of the four men named James in the New Testament have been suggested by scholars to have written this epistle, James the son of Zebedee (and brother of John) and James the half-brother of Jesus, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1749, "Introduction To The Letter Of James: Authorship."
 - 2. James the son of Zebedee was martyred in A. D. 44 (Acts 12:2), likely ruling him out, and the letter's "authoritative tone" rules out the lesser known James and points to Jesus' half-brother who became the recognized leader of the Jerusalem Church, Ibid. (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18). Also, there are close similarities between the style of Greek used in this letter and that used by James' speech in Acts 15 (James 1:1 with Acts 15:23; 1:27 and Acts 15:14; 2:5 and Acts 15:13), Ibid.
- B. Well, James' history as half-brother to Jesus was marked by his glaring, initial lack of faith in Jesus:
 - 1. Mark 3:20-21 NIV explains that Jesus' family, explained in Mark 3:31 to be Jesus' Mother Mary and His half-brothers (through Mary and Joseph), once came to acquire custody of Him since Jesus was skipping meals with a healing ministry that was attracting great crowds. This was a lapse of faith in Jesus' credentials on Mary's part, unbelief shared by her sons, among whom would have been James!
 - 2. We also know from John 7:1-5 that James with Jesus' other half-brothers tried to get Him to perform miraculous works in Judaea for a public show with an ungodly view of His Messianic calling, and John 7:5 explains this effort revealed a lack of real trust in Jesus as God's Biblical Messiah.
 - 3. However, when Christ arose from the dead and "appeared to James, then to all the apostles," 1 Cor. 15:7, a great change occurred, and James became a "pillar" in the Jerusalem Church, Galatians 2:9.
 - 4. Also, there are at least fifteen allusions in James' Epistle to the teachings of Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount that was given in Israel (Ibid., "Contents"), so James had either heard Jesus give this message, or had it impressed on him following Christ's earthly life. That message was very practical, presenting "the way of righteous living for those in God's family, contrasting the new Way with the old one' of the scribes and the Pharisees" who lived in false spirituality, Ibid., fn. to Matthew 5:1.
 - 5. Thus, James himself had to stand corrected, to shift from unbelief in his half-brother, Jesus, to believe in Him as the true Messiah and Son of God with His true spirituality from heaven.
 - 6. Consequently, James is eminently qualified to give us a sermonic admonition: he himself had to be publicly, dramatically corrected, and that in reference to the identity of his half-brother, who turned out to be the Son of God, making it important that we accept James' admonitions for our own lives!

Lesson: *James' admonitions in his Epistle of James come from a man who himself had to be greatly, publicly corrected, making it much easier for us to accept his sermonic style as one who understands our role as people (possibly) standing in need of (at least some of his) Biblical correction!*

Application: *May we not only value James' sermonic style, but also learn the testimony of those who disciple us that we may appreciate God's reasons in using them to give us admonitions, Hebrews 5:1-2.*