The LETTER of JAMES to the 12 TRIBES[1]

LAST GENERATION VERSION

Translation & Notes by Tim Warner

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James,[2] slave of God and of the Master Jesus Anointed; To the twelve tribes, those among the dispersion – Rejoice!

Perseverance in Trials and Temptations

2 Consider everything joy, my brothers, whenever you may fall into various trials,[3] 3 knowing that the test of your faith produces endurance. 4 Yet let endurance have its finished work so that you may be complete and fully-formed,[4] lacking in nothing. 5 Yet if anyone of you lacks wisdom[5] let him request from God, the one giving generously to all without criticizing and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in trust without

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[1] In this letter the pastor of the Jerusalem assembly instructs Israelite believers how to live and behave among the Gentiles where they had been scattered due to persecution by their leaders in Judea. There is much in this letter that shows the influence of Paul's ministry and parallels his teaching concerning the Law, especially in Galatians and Hebrews. This is quite remarkable since James was pastor of the Jerusalem assembly from which some of the Judaizers who sought to undermine Paul's ministry originated. This strongly implies that by the time this was written, James had thoroughly considered and fully embraced Paul's theology, and that he approved of Israelite brethren living among the dispersion no longer keeping unique requirements of the Law of Moses, but following the Law of the Anointed alone. Thus this book was almost certainly written late, after the events of Acts 21:15-40, and close to James' martyrdom in AD 62. See also Peter's endorsement of Paul's theology in 2 Pet. 3:14-18.

[2] James and Jude were younger brothers of Jesus (Gal. 1:19; Jude 1:1), James being the oldest and Jude the youngest (Matt. 13:55). Before Jesus' resurrection, they did not believe on Him. But shortly after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His brother James (1 Cor. 15:7). Sometime prior to the death of Herod Agrippa in AD 44, James became the head pastor of the assembly at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17-23; Acts 21:18; Gal. 2:12). His position of authority within the Jerusalem assembly seems to have surpassed even the Apostles, as is evidenced by his having the final word at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13-21) and his being mentioned first by Paul (Gal. 2:9). James was murdered in AD 62 (Jos. Ant. Bk. XX, ch. ix) because the Jewish leadership was furious over Paul's escaping their plot to assassinate him (Acts 23:14-24). James was thrown off the top of the Temple, and then stoned and clubbed to death (Eusebius, Bk. II, ch. ix).

[3] The same Greek word is used for both trials and temptations to sin. Many of the believing Israelites were being severely persecuted in Judea by the unbelieving leadership. The arrest and beating of Peter and John (Acts 4:1-21), the stoning of Steven (Acts 7), Saul's persecution of believing Israelites (Acts 9:1-2), Herod's execution of John's brother James (Acts 12:2), Paul's arrest at the Temple (Acts 21:26-36), the persecution of those who assisted Paul while in prison awaiting trial in Caesarea (Heb. 10:32-34), and James' own murder illustrate the severity of the difficulty that Israelite believers had in Judea. Because of these trials, many Jewish Christians were tempted to turn away and denounce the Faith.

[4] The Christian life is one of following in Jesus' own pattern, becoming complete, perfected. This theme is found in Heb. 2:10; Heb. 5:9; Heb. 7:28; Heb. 9:9; Heb. 10:1; Heb. 11:40; Heb. 12:22, in 2 Peter 1:5-11, and in 1 John 2:5; 1 John 4:12,17-18.

vacillating.[6] For the one vacillating[7] has become like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Master, 8 [being] a two-soul man,[8] unstable in all his ways. 9 But let the downcast brother celebrate in his exaltation,[9] 10 but the rich in his degradation[10] because as a flower of grass he will pass away. 11 For the sun rose with burning [heat] and dried the grass, and its flower fell off, and its appearance perished.[11] Thus also the rich will be extinguished in his ways. 12 Blessed is the man who endures the temptations because having been proven, he will receive the wreath of Life[12] which the Master promised to those loving Him.[13] 13 Let no one who is being tempted say that "I am being tempted by God." For God is not tempted by evil and He tempts no one. 14 But each one is tempted by his own desire, being seduced away and enticed.[14] 15 Afterward the desire, having conceived, births sin. And sin, being full-grown, produces death. 16 Do not be deceived my beloved brothers. 17 Every good gift and every perfect endowment[15] is from above, descending from the Father of the lights[16] within whom is no alteration or shadow of

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[5] The point here is not that a foolish man might suddenly become a wise man in his nature or character. Rather, someone in need of special wisdom regarding an important decision (such as that faced under severe persecution) should ask God for guidance regarding that decision.

[6] The vacillating man is one who is torn between two choices, unable to make a sound decision or not sticking to a decision trusting God and enduring the temptation.

[7] Since perseverance in faith during trying times is the goal, wisdom is required. Lot is an example of a "two-soul man." At first he was willing to leave everything and accompany Abraham, living in a tent in the Promised Land, based solely on the promise of the Abrahamic inheritance. Yet, when things got difficult, Lot chose to move to Sodom because the surrounding area was more fertile and conducive to expanding his herds and flocks. Vacillating cost Lot his wife and daughters.

[8] James 4:8

[9] As God gives him wisdom for the journey

[10] James 5:1-6

[11] James called to mind the words of Isaiah 40:6-8, applying this passage to the Temple priests who had enriched themselves through their unjust application of the Law. The book of Malachi condemns these, which was the basis for Jesus' parable of the "Rich Man" (the priesthood) and Lazarus (the Anointed as Abraham's Seed).

[12] He will receive the "wreath" (or reward) of immortality in the resurrection of the Just.

[13] James sets the inheritance in the age to come as the proper focus, the thing that motivates believers to persevere in difficult times and circumstances.

[14] This passage is used by some to claim that the Adversary is not a corporal being, and that temptation is completely internal. But the point of this passage is that God is not a tempter, not whether or not the Adversary is a tempter. If temptation is completely internal, then "the seductress" (Prov. 2:16) could not have any power. The point here is that each person has internal weaknesses and is vulnerable to temptation whether or not someone external is attempting to play on his weakness.

[15] The Abrahamic inheritance

[16] The sun, moon, and stars (Gen. 1:16; Psalm 136:7-9)

turning. 18 Having determined, He birthed[17] us by the word of Truth, for us to be as first-fruits[18] of His creatures.

Hearers vs. Doers

19 Therefore my beloved brothers, let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, 20 for the anger of man does not work the justice of God. 21 Therefore, having put away all filthiness and excess of evil, receive the planted word,[19] the one able to rescue your souls. 22 And become doers of the word[20] and not only hearers, deceiving yourselves, 23 because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, this one has become as a man considering the face he inherited in a mirror. 24 For he considered himself, and having gone away, he also forgot what he was like. 25 But the one looking into the mature Law,[21] the [Law] of freedom, and has continued [looking],[22] not being a forgetful hearer but a doer of the deed,[23] this one will be blessed in what he does. 26 If anyone among you seems to be religious,[24] [yet] not bridling his tongue[25] but deceiving his heart, this one's ritual observance is empty. 27 Ritual cleanliness and purity[26] with the God and Father is this: to relieve orphans[27] and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unblemished from the world.

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[17] This term never refers to "begetting" (fathering), but rather to bring forth the final product as in the birth of a child. Compare v. 15.

[18] Peter indicated that the New Covenant was to Israel first (Acts 3:25-26). Paul emphasized this concept also (Rom. 1:16; Rom. 2:9-10; Eph. 1:12). The concept originated with Jesus (Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8).

[19] This is a reference to Jesus' parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:1-23).

[20] That is, the "word of Truth," the teaching of the Anointed (v. 17)

[21] The Law of the Anointed, the New Covenant (Gal. 6:2)

[22] Continual self-examination and self-evaluation against the Law of the Anointed is critical for the blessed life.

[23] John 14:15,21; John 15:10

[24] This term refers to those who kept the outward rituals and ordinances of the Law meticulously.

[25] Matt. 5:21-22

[26] Here James used terminology from the Law of Moses concerning ritual cleanliness and purity, such as eating a kosher diet, not touching a dead body, rules regarding leprosy, a woman's menstrual cycle, giving birth, etc., including all of the ordinances governing sacrifices and time periods for cleansing. Instead James offered something entirely different that is completely inconsistent with ritual cleanliness and purity required by the Law of Moses. God considered relieving orphans and widows and keeping oneself unpolluted by the world to be ritual purity without these other requirements of the Law of Moses. Thus, *"the mature Law, the Law of Freedom,"* supersedes the Law of Moses.

[27] Matt. 18:1-11

Chapter 2

The Trap of Favoritism

My brothers, do not hold the Faith of our Master, Jesus Anointed, the [Master] of glory,[28] with favoritism.[29] 2 For if a man should come into your synagogue[30] with a gold ring in expensive clothing, yet also a poor [man] in shabby clothing, 3 and you should look upon the one wearing expensive clothing and should say to him, "Sit here [in] a good [seat]," and to the poor [man] you should say, "Stand over there," or "Sit here under my foot." 4 Have you not also discriminated among yourselves and became judges with wicked motives?[31] 5 Hear, my beloved brothers. Has not God chosen the poor[32] of this world, rich in trust and heirs of the Kingdom which He promised to those loving Him? 6 Yet you devalue the poor. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you before courts? 7 Do they not blaspheme the great Name[33] having been invoked upon you?[34] 8 Yet if you fulfill the royal command according to the scripture, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself,"*[35] you are doing well. 9 But if you are partial, you commit sin, being exposed by the command[36] as violators. 10 For whoever will keep[37] the whole Law yet will stumble in one [command], he has become liable for all.[38] 11 For the one saying, *"You may not commit adultery,"* also said, *"You may not murder."* So if you will not commit adultery yet you will murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law. 12

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[28] 1 Cor. 2:8

[29] Luke 14:12-14; James 3:17

[30] The Hebrew word "synagogue" (which here is transliterated into Greek) literally means "assembly" and can refer to either the gathering or to the place of gathering. Some take this statement to imply that James wrote to Jewish Christians who remained members of the Jewish synagogues. Others suppose that he was referring to a Christian assembly using language familiar to his Jewish audience. Still others take this as the first reference to a Jewish Christian house of worship. All other references in the New Testament place Christian assemblies in homes.

[31] Luke 14:7-14

[32] Matt. 22:1-10

[33] Acts 4:12

[34] This is baptism in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:16; Acts 10:48; Acts 19:5; 1 Cor. 6:11).

[35] Jesus declared that the greatest commandment in the Law was to love God, and the second was to *"love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matt. 22:36-40, referencing Deut. 6:4 & Lev. 19:18). However, He also embellished the Mosaic command. *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"* (Matt. 5:43-44).

[36] Exposed and convicted by the "royal command" as expanded by Jesus. See Gal. 5:14.

[37] The future tense of the verb implies this refers to someone who intends to keep the Law of Moses, or would place himself under the whole Law, that is if you determine to keep the whole Law as an obligation. If James expected that his Israelite – Christian audience was still under the Law of Moses he would have used a present tense verb, not future tense. This concept is dealt with by Paul in Gal. 5:14-18 where he indicated that keeping the "royal command" of the Anointed (as led by the Breath) means one is not under the jurisdiction of the Law of Moses.

[38] This is a paraphrase of Deut. 27:26. Its application here echoes Paul's explanation in Gal. 3:10.

Speak like this, and act like this, as those about to be judged by the Law of Freedom.[39] 13 For the judgment [is] merciless for the one not practicing mercy.[40] And mercy excels over judgment.[41]

Trust is only Valid when accompanied by Action

14 What is the benefit my brothers if anyone should claim to have trust yet should not have deeds? That trust is not able to deliver him. 15 And if a brother or sister should be naked or should be lacking daily nourishment 16 yet someone should say, "Go your way in peace; be warmed and filled," but you should not give them the necessities of the body, what is the benefit? 17 Likewise the trust, if it does not have deeds, is dead by itself. 18 But someone will say, "You have trust and I have deeds."[42] Show me your trust apart from your deeds and I will show you my trust out from my deeds! 19 You trust that God is one.[43] You are doing great! The demons believe and shudder! 20 Yet are you willing to understand, O empty man, that trust without deeds is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified from deeds, having placed Isaac his son upon the altar?[44] 22 You observe that the trust was working together with his deeds, and out from the deeds the trust was completed. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which says, *"And Abraham trusted God and it was counted unto him justice,"*[45] and he was called *"friend"* of God.[46] 24 You observe therefore that a man is justified from deeds and not from trust exclusively. 25 And similarly, was not Rahab the prostitute justified from deeds having received the messengers and having sent them away a different way?[47] 26 For just as the body without the breath is dead, thus also the trust without the deeds is dead.

Chapter 3

Warning for Christian Teachers

My brothers, do not many [of you] become teachers, having observed that we will receive harsher judgment,[48] 2 for we all trip in many things. If anyone does not trip in word, this is a mature man able to bridle also the whole body. 3 Observe, we put bits into the mouths of horses for them to yield to us, and we steer their whole body. 4

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[39] This is exactly what Paul defined in Gal. 5:14-18, that those who obey the Law of Christ are walking in the Breath and are therefore *"not under the Law* [of Moses]," thus the title, *"Law of Freedom."*

[40] This concept is at the core of the Law of the Anointed (Matt. 6:12,14-15; Matt. 7:1; Matt. 18:21-35).

[41] That is, the Law of the Anointed (which is the "Law of Freedom" is far superior to the harsh judgment contained in the Law of Moses, especially since transgressing one command makes one guilty of all.

[42] Assuming that trust and deeds are mutually exclusive

[43] Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:28-34; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; James 4:12

[44] Gen. 22

[45] Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6

[46] Isa. 41:8

[47] Joshua 2:1-24; Josh. 6:17-27; Heb. 11:31

[48] Matt. 5:19

Observe also the ships being of vast dimensions and being propelled by strong winds, are steered with a small rudder wherever the impulse of the pilot may intend. 5 Thus also the tongue is a small member and talks big. Observe what a great forest a tiny fire kindles! 6 Also the tongue is a fire, a world of injustice. Thus the tongue is set among our members, soiling the whole body, and setting ablaze the cycle of genealogy,[49] and is ignited by Gehenna! 7 For every species, that of wild-animals, and of birds, and of reptiles, besides also of the salty-seas is tamed and has been tamed in nature by man. 8 But the tongue no man is able to tame, unruly evil, full of deadly venom. 9 With it we bless the God and Father, and with it we curse men, those having originated in the image of God. 10 Out of the same mouth comes blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things must not occur! 11 Does a spring gush pure and bitter [water] from the same hole? 12 My brothers, is a fig tree able to produce olives, or a grape-vine figs. Likewise no spring gives salty and pure water. 13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him display his deeds from good behavior in meekness[50] of wisdom.[51] 14 But if you have bitter envy and strife in your heart, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom descending from above, but is earthly, soulish, demonic. 16 For wherever jealousy and strife is, there is confusion and every foul deed. 17 Yet the wisdom from above is indeed primarily pure, then peaceable, lenient, yielding, overflowing with mercy and good fruits, not judgmental[52] or hypocritical. 18 And the fruit of justice is planted in peace for those making peace.[53]

Chapter 4

Conflicts arise from the Worldly-Minded

From where do battles and fights among you originate? Are they not from your lusts, those striving within your members? 2 You desire and do not possess; you murder[54] and are jealous and are powerless to obtain. You fight and battle, but you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive because you are asking improperly so that you might expend in your own pleasures. 4 Adulterers and adulteresses![55] Have you not seen that fondness for the world is hostility [towards] God? Whoever then should be willing to be fond of the world is counted an enemy of

[49] Moses warned that a father's sins have devastating effects upon his children, his grandchildren, and his great-grandchildren (Exod. 34:7; Num. 14:18). Children often make poor choices due to a poor parenting example. This becomes a generational cycle.

[50] Matt. 5:5

[51] James 1:5

[52] Matt. 7:1-5

[53] Matt. 5:9

[54] James had in mind Jesus' Sermon on the Mount where He equated hatred with murder (Matt. 5:20-26).

[55] Fondness for the world and its materialism is idolatry. God views this as "adultery" (Luke 16:19,25; Rev. 18:3) and a breach of the Covenant, which is repeatedly likened to a marriage.

God. 5 Or do you suppose the Scripture says for nothing [that] for envy He[56] desires the Breath which He stationed[57] among us?[58] 6 Yet He provides more grace![59] Consequently he says, *"God resists[60] the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*[61] 7 Submit then to God, oppose the Slanderer and he will retreat from you. 8 Draw close to God and He will draw close to you. Sinners, wash your hands. Two-soul [men],[62] purify your hearts.[63] 9 Be afflicted and mourn and lament. Turn your laughter into mourning and your joy into sorrow. 10 Be humbled before the Master and He will exalt you. 11 Do not speak against one another, brothers. The one speaking against a brother and judging his brother speaks contrary to the Law[64] and judges the Law. 12 One[65] is the Law-giver and Judge, the one able to rescue and to destroy. So who are you, the one judging an associate?

Right Dependence upon God's Will

13 Come now, those saying, "today or tomorrow we will go unto this or that city and spend a year there and we will trade and make a profit," 14 who are not proficient [in] the things of tomorrow! For what is your life? For it is a fog, appearing briefly and disappearing afterward. 15 Instead you are to say, "If the Master may also be willing we will live and will do this or that." 16 But now you brag in your arrogance! All such boasting is destructive. 17 Therefore, to the one having observed to do right and not doing, it is sin to him.

Chapter 5

Fate of the Rich who oppress the Poor

Come now, [you] rich, lament, wailing over your calamities, those overtaking [you]. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and your [expensive] clothing has become moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver has decomposed, and their corrosion will be for a witness to you and will consume your flesh like fire. You horde in the final days! 4 Look! The wage of the

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[56] τὸ πνεῦμα (the Breath) is the direct object of the third person verb ἐπιποθεῖ (He desires).

[57] κατῴκισεν to place, or cause to remain; note the past tense (aorist indicative).

[58] This is a summation of Gen. 6:4-7 (LXX). *"And the Lord God said, My Spirit shall certainly not remain among these men forever, … And the Lord God, having seen that the wicked actions of men were multiplied upon the earth, and that everyone in his heart was intently brooding over evil continually, then God laid it to heart that he had made man upon the earth, and he pondered it deeply. … 'for I am grieved that I have made them'."*

[59] Gen. 6:8

[60] ἀντιτάσσεται, literally, "is arranging Himself against," as though a general was arranging his soldiers in formations against a foe.

[61] Prov. 3:34 LXX; 1 Pet. 5:5

[62] James 1:8

[63] That is, become single minded (Matt. 6:19-34).

[64] The Law of the Anointed, specifically the commandment in Matt. 7:1-5

[65] See note on James 2:19

workers, those reaping your fields, which has been withheld by you cries out, and the pleadings of the reapers have entered into the ears of the Master of Armies.[66] 5 You indulge [in luxury] upon the Land and squander. You indulge your [own] hearts as in a day of slaughter. 6 You convicted, you murdered the just; he does not resist you.

Patient Endurance is Required

7 Be patient then, brothers, until the arrival of the Master. Look! The farmer awaits the valuable produce of the land, being patient over it until he receives the early and late rains. 8 You also be patient, stabilize your hearts because the arrival of the Master has neared. 9 Do not complain against one another, so that you may not be judged.[67] Look! The Judge was standing before the doors![68] 10 My brothers, receive the example of hardship and patience – the prophets who spoke [in] the name of the Master. 11 Look! We celebrate the persevering ones! You heard of the perseverance of Job and you saw the Master's goal,[69] that the Master is very compassionate and merciful.

Jesus forbid Swearing

12 But my brothers, *"Do not swear before all, neither [by] the sky … or the Land,"*[70] or by any other oath,[71] *"but let your 'yes' be yes and 'no' be no,"*[72] so that you may not fall under judgment.

Hope for the Lapsed Christian

13 Is anyone among you under hardship? Let him pray. Is anyone joyful? Let him strum.[73] 14 Is anyone among you faltering?[74] Let him summon the elders[75] of the

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[66] The Greek word is a transliteration of the Hebrew term "sabaoth." It is the equivalent of the Hebrew expression "Lord of Hosts."

[67] Matt. 7:1-5; James 2:4; James 4:11

[68] James portrays the Anointed as eaves dropping outside the doors when such complaining and slander was taking place. See also Rev. 3:20.

[69] The eventual outcome of Job's endurance was abundant blessing (Job. 42:10-17)

[70] Quoting the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5:34-35

[71] Summarizing Matt. 5:35b-36

[72] Quoting Matt. 5:37

[73] The Greek verb ψαλλω (psallo) literally means to pluck or strum a stringed instrument. As a verb, it means to play the stringed instruments of David and sing his Psalms composed for both voice and strings. For the same verb (psallo) see also Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19, and for the noun (psalmos – compositions written for strings and voice). See 1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.

[74] That is his endurance has faltered in trials, persecution, or hardship, as did Peter when he denied the Anointed three times.

[75] Jesus gave His authority regarding discipline and excommunication to the leadership of the Christian assembly (Matt. 18:11-20). This authority is the "keys to the Kingdom" (Matt. 16:16-19). In applying Jesus' comments here, James shows that this authority was not granted only to Peter or even the Twelve, but was transferred to the hands of the elders of the local assembly.

assembly and let them pray over him, anointing him with olive oil[76] in the name of the Master.[77] 15 And the vow[78] of trust will rescue the faltering one and the Master will awaken[79] him.[80] And whatever sins he may have done will be forgiven[81] him. 16 Acknowledge faults to one another[82] and be desirous over one another[83] however you might be healed.[84] The petition of the just [one] is powerful and very effective. 17 Elijah was a man of similar experience with us. And he prayed with a request of no rain, and it did not rain upon the ground for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again and the sky gave rain and the ground germinated its fruit. 19 Brothers, if any among you should stray from the truth, and anyone should turn him back, 20 let him know that the one turning back a sinner from his straying from the way will rescue a soul out of death and will cover a plethora of sins.

[76] This ceremony is unique in Scripture. Yet it is clearly patterned after the anointing of Aaron as being set apart for God's service. It was a tangible expression of complete dedication to God.

[77] A rebaptism is not necessary for the lapsed Christian. The anointing with oil accompanied his vow.

[78] The Greek word εὐχὴ does not mean a prayer (request, petition), but a vow (see: Gen. 28:20). This is how it is translated everywhere else it appears (Acts 18:18; Acts 21:23). It refers to making an oath or solemn promise to God before witnesses, a promise that has the most severe consequences if broken (Deut. 23:21-23; Judges 11:30-40; Eccl. 5:4-6).

[79] That is in the Resurrection of the Just. The Greek word ἐγείρω means to rise up as from sleep, to awaken, and is frequently used in the NT for the resurrection (cf. John 2:22; 5:21; John 12:1,9,17; John 21:14).

[80] There is hope for the lapsed Christian who has not yet completely abandoned the Faith. This is in contrast to those who have become apostates, for whom there is no repentance possible (John 15:1-6; Heb. 3:12-14; Heb. 6:4-8; Heb. 10:23-31; 1 John 5:16).

[81] John 20:22-23

[82] Not concealing one's faults or personal struggle is an act of humility. See: 1 John 1:8-10.

[83] That is, be concerned over fellow-believers who are faltering in their Christian walk.

[84] This is a reference to Jesus' commentary on Isaiah 6:7-10 in Matt. 13:10-15. The "healing" is not from physical ailments, but from having ears but no understanding, from having eyes but no perception, from a heart that is dull, ears that are heavy, and eyes that are closed.