

The background of the cover is a photograph of a rocky coastline. The water is a deep blue, transitioning to a lighter, greenish-blue near the shore where waves are breaking over rocks. The sky is a clear blue with some light, wispy clouds. On the right side, a large, craggy rock formation extends into the water. In the distance, a low-lying coastline with some buildings is visible across the water.

The Accusing

Spirit

A Teaching Outline

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Being Falsely Accused

Isaiah 54:17

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue [that] shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This [is] the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness [is] of me, saith the LORD.

God made a covenant with Noah that he has never broken (Genesis 9:8-17). Likewise, God made a covenant of peace with the people of Israel that the time would come when he would stop pouring out his anger on them; he would teach their citizens and give them prosperity.

A hypocrite destroys his neighbour.

Proverbs 11:9

A hypocrite with [his] mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

"Godly people find life" because they live life more fully each day. They also find life because people usually live longer when they live right.

In addition, they need not fear death because eternal life is God's gift to them (John 11:25). By contrast, evil people not only find eternal death but also miss out on real life on earth.

When you are reviled, God will bless you.

Matthew 5:11

Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Jesus said to be happy when we're persecuted for our faith. Persecution can be good because

- (1) It takes our eyes off earthly rewards,
- (2) It strips away superficial belief,
- (3) It strengthens the faith of those who endure, and
- (4) Our attitude through it serves as an example to others who follow.

We can be comforted knowing that God's greatest prophets were persecuted (Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel). The fact that we are being persecuted proves that we have been faithful; faithless people would be unnoticed. In the future God will reward the faithful by receiving them into his eternal Kingdom, where there is no more persecution.

Do not avenge yourself.

Romans 12:19

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

In this day of lawsuits and incessant demands for legal rights, Paul's command sounds almost impossible. When someone hurts you deeply, instead of giving him what he deserves, Paul says to befriend him. Why does Paul tell us to forgive our enemies? (1) Forgiveness may break a cycle of retaliation and lead to mutual reconciliation. (2) It may make the enemy feel ashamed and change his or her ways. (3) By contrast, repaying evil for evil hurts you just as much as it hurts your enemy. Even if your enemy never repents, forgiving him or her will free you of a heavy load of bitterness.

Forgiveness involves both attitudes and actions. If you find it difficult to *feel* forgiving toward someone who has hurt you, try responding with kind actions. If appropriate, tell this person that you would like to heal your relationship. Lend a helping hand. Send him or her a gift. Smile at him or her. Many times you will discover that right actions lead to right feelings.

The trying of your faith works patience.

James 1:2-4

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into different temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

We can't really know the depth of our character until we see how we react under pressure. It is easy to be kind to others when everything is going well, but can we still be kind when others are treating us unfairly? God wants to make us mature and complete, not to keep us from all pain. Instead of complaining about our struggles, we should see them as opportunities for growth. Thank God for promising to be with you in rough times. Ask him to help you solve your problems or to give you the strength to endure them. Then be patient. God will not leave you alone with your problems; he will stay close and help you grow.

By "wisdom," James is talking not only about knowledge but about the ability to make wise decisions in difficult circumstances. Whenever we need wisdom, we can pray to God, and he will generously supply what we need. Christians don't have to grope around in the dark, hoping to stumble upon answers. We can ask for God's wisdom to guide our choices.

The wisdom that we need has three distinct characteristics:

It is practical.

The wisdom from God relates to life even during the most trying times. It is not a wisdom isolated from suffering and trials. This wisdom is the tool by which trials are overcome. An intelligent person may have profound ideas, but a wise person puts profound ideas into action. Intelligence will allow someone to describe several

reasons why the car broke down. The wise person chooses the most likely reason and proceeds to take action.

It is divine.

God's wisdom goes beyond common sense. Common sense does not lead us to choose joy in the middle of trials. This wisdom begins with respect for God, leads to living by God's direction, and results in the ability to tell right from wrong.

It is Christlike.

Asking for wisdom is ultimately asking to be like Christ. The Bible identifies Christ as the "wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24; 2:1-7).

Do not render evil for evil.

1 Peter 3:9

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

Where is God? How can we know God is real? Who says the Bible is any better than other holy books? To answer these questions, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, as living evidence. God also chose Peter and others to show what a difference true faith makes in the real world. So here the once rash, belligerent, domineering, and arrogant Peter bears witness to a life of harmony, compassion, love, and humility. What a difference God makes! You, too, are God's witness to skeptical people. Let your life be evidence of God's truth. Let your pride become humility and your insensitivity give way to genuine affection for others.

In our fallen world, it is often deemed acceptable by some to tear people down verbally or to get back at them if we feel hurt. Peter, remembering Jesus' teaching to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39), encourages his readers to pay back wrongs with a blessing, such as praying for the offenders. In God's Kingdom, revenge is unacceptable behavior, as is insulting a person, no matter how indirectly it is done.

Rise above getting back at those who hurt you. Instead of reacting angrily to these people, pray for them.

The mouth of the wicked use lying tongues.

Psalms 109:2

For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.

David endured many false accusations (1 Samuel 22:7-13; 2 Samuel 15:3, 4), as did Christ centuries later (Matthew 26:59-61; 27:39-44). Verse 8 is quoted in Acts 1:20 as being fulfilled in Judas's death.

God is a shield to those who trust in him.

Proverbs 30:5-6

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Because God is infinite, certain aspects of his nature will always remain a mystery. Compare these questions with the questions God asked Job (Job 38-41). Use these questions to probe your own humility and awe before your Creator.

Some scholars feel that the son referred to is the Son of God, the preincarnate being of the Messiah who, before the foundation of the earth, participated in the Creation. Colossians 1:16, 17 teaches that through Christ the world was created.

Having too much money can be dangerous, but so can having too little. Being poor can, in fact, be hazardous to spiritual as well as physical health. On the other hand, being rich is not the answer. As Jesus pointed out, rich people have trouble getting into God's Kingdom (Matthew 19:23, 24).

Like Paul, we can learn how to live whether we have little or plenty (Philippians 4:12), but our lives are more likely to be effective if we have "neither poverty nor riches."

Oh, Lord, be not far from me.

Psalm 35:21-23

Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, aha, aha, our eye hath seen it. This thou hast seen, O Lord: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me. Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

David cried out to God to defend him when people wrongly accused him. If you are unjustly accused, your natural reaction may be to lash out in revenge or to give a detailed defense of your every move. Instead, ask God to fight the battle for you. He will clear your name in the eyes of those who really matter.

Evil communications corrupt good manners.

1 Corinthians 15:33

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Keeping company with those who deny the resurrection can corrupt good Christian character. Don't let your relationships with unbelievers lead you away from Christ or cause your faith to waver.

Strive not with a man without a cause.

Proverbs 3:30

Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

Withholding good is inconsiderate and unfair, whether it is repaying a loan, returning a tool, or fulfilling a promise. Withholding destroys trust and creates a great inconvenience for the other person. Be as eager to do good as you are to have good done to you.

The persecutors shall not prevail.

Jeremiah 20:11

But the LORD [is] with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: [their] everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

Jeremiah cried out in despair mixed with praise, unburdening his heart to God. He had faithfully proclaimed God's word and had received nothing in return but persecution and sorrow. Yet when he withheld God's word for a while, it became fire in his bones until he could hold it back no longer. When God's living message of forgiveness and love becomes fire in your bones, you also will feel compelled to share it with others, regardless of the results.

Do not render evil for evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

See that none render evil for evil unto any [man]; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all [men].

Don't loaf around with the lazy; warn them. Don't yell at the timid and weak; encourage and help them. At times it can be difficult to distinguish between idleness and timidity. Two people may be doing nothing—one out of laziness and the other out of shyness or fear of doing something wrong. The key to ministry is sensitivity: sensing the condition of each person and offering the appropriate remedy for each situation. You can't effectively help until you know the problem. You can't apply the medicine until you know where the wound is.

Our joy, prayers, and thankfulness should not fluctuate with our circumstances or feelings. Obeying these three commands—be joyful, never stop praying, and be thankful—often goes against our natural inclinations. When we make a conscious decision to do what God says, however, we will begin to see people in a new perspective. When we do God's will, we will find it easier to be joyful and thankful.

We cannot spend all our time on our knees, but it is possible to have a prayerful attitude at all times. This attitude is built upon acknowledging our dependence on God, realizing his presence within us, and determining to obey him fully. Then we will find it natural to pray frequent, spontaneous, short prayers. A prayerful attitude is not a substitute for regular times of prayer but should be an outgrowth of those times.

Do good to those who hate you.

Luke 6:27

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

The Jews despised the Romans because they oppressed God's people, but Jesus told the people to love these enemies. Such words turned many away from Christ. Jesus wasn't talking about having affection for enemies; he was talking about an act of the will. You can't "fall into" this kind of love—it takes conscious effort. Loving our enemies means acting in their best interests. We can pray for them, and we can think of ways to help them. Jesus loves the whole world, even though the world is in rebellion against God. Jesus asks us to follow his example by loving our enemies. Grant your enemies the same respect and rights as you desire for yourself.

The devil seeks whom he may devour.

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, and seeking whom he may devour:

Peter warns us to watch out for Satan when we are suffering or being persecuted. If you are feeling alone, weak, helpless, and cut off from other believers, or if you are so focused on your troubles that you forget to watch for danger, those are the times when you are especially vulnerable to Satan's attacks. During times of suffering, seek other Christians for support. Keep your eyes on Christ, and resist the devil. Then, says James, "he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print