

HOLINESS AND THE MISSION OF GOD IN THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

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Abstract: James's central critique in the Epistle is faith that is devoid of practical action or ethics. Genuine Christian faith should be reflected in practical ethical conduct. The theme of holiness and the mission of God is explored from the perspective of the practical nature of holiness that is aligned with God's mission. Holiness involves practical action that reflects the genuineness of faith. True holiness is expressed in practical ways, both in fulfilling personal and communal ethical responsibilities through guarding oneself against the wickedness of the world (1:27; 4:4), loving one's neighbor (2:8), caring for the needy (1:27; 2:14–17), and administering justice for the oppressed (2:6–7; 5:1–6). In James, Christian faith (orthodoxy) and ethics (orthopraxy) are inseparable, and the practical nature of holiness and the mission of God is founded on these two aspects of Christianity.

INTRODUCTION

The following questions guide the arguments of this paper. How is the theme of holiness presented in the Epistle of James, and what implications does this presentation have for our understanding of God's mission?

James' central critique in the Epistle is of faith devoid of practical action or ethics. Genuine Christian faith should be reflected in practical ethical conduct. The theme of holiness and the mission of God is explored from the perspective of the practical nature of holiness that is aligned with God's mission. Holiness involves practical action that reflects the genuineness of faith. True holiness is expressed in practical ways, both in fulfilling personal and communal ethical responsibilities through guarding oneself against the wickedness of the world (1:27; 4:4), loving one's neighbor (2:8), caring for the needy (1:27; 2:14–17), and administering justice for the oppressed (2:6–7; 5:1–6).

In James, faith (orthodoxy) and ethics (orthopraxy) are inseparable, and the practical nature of holiness and the mission of God is founded on these two aspects of Christianity. Mark Allan Powell accurately stated the concern of the Epistle: "It presents Christianity as a way of life, not just a system of beliefs."¹ Christians fulfill their missional vocation as witnesses to the world through practical ethical conduct.

How should believers maintain their holiness in a fallen world? How can they bear witness to God's holiness in the world, which is their mission? Biblical texts such as Matt 5:13–16 and 1 Pet 2:9² are crucial in this regard. Believers are called to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and their ethical lives must reflect the holiness of God and be a beacon for the fallen world. According to Christopher J. H. Wright, "In the Old as well as the New Testament, the ethical demand on those who claim to be God's people is determined by the mission with which they have been entrusted."³ As he writes, the mission entrusted to God's people is "to be—a light to the nations, a holy priesthood."⁴

My thesis is that holiness and mission in James are presented as witnessing Christian faith through practical personal and communal ethics. In other words, although James focuses on internal matters and does not explicitly command his audience to go outside their community for a *proclamation* task, he urges them to *live* a practical, ethical life consistent with their faith. And the goal of consistently

¹ Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 463.

² Unless otherwise indicated, I will be using the English Standard Version (ESV) throughout.

³ Christopher J. H. Wright, "Truth with a Mission: Reading All Scripture Missiologically," *SBJT* 15, no. 2 (n.d.): 13.

⁴ Wright, 13.

living out their faith in practical ethical living is to fulfill God's mission by bearing witness to the world. As Wright puts it, "Those who know God are required to make God known. And that requires the medium of words and deeds."⁵

THEOLOGICAL AND MISSIONAL VALUE OF JAMES

The role of James receives less emphasis in theological and missional discussions. Scot McKnight rightly observed that both in the past and the present, James is "ignored when it comes to Christian theology and gospel preaching."⁶ During the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, Luther regarded James as a less suitable candidate for the theology of salvation, i.e., justification by faith. Most Bible scholars find little missional significance in the Epistle because the traditional understanding of mission mainly focuses on specific biblical books or texts containing explicit missional imperatives.

Nonetheless, James, as part of Scripture, has significant theological and missional value. Refuting the traditional missiological approach, Wright states, "The Bible is in so many ways a *missional phenomenon* in itself."⁷ Wright's argument is sound. The understanding of mission should not solely rest on selecting specific texts from the books in the Bible. Wright shifts his understanding of mission "from *The Biblical Basis of Mission* to *The Missional Basis of the Bible*."⁸ Indeed, this shift of understanding must influence our missional hermeneutics. Likewise, Johannes Nissen states, "The Bible is not a single book with a single understanding of mission."⁹

THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF JAMES

When commenting on each book of the New Testament, Martin Luther made a negative assessment of the Epistle of James, saying, "St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it."¹⁰ Luther believed that James placed too much emphasis on works and not enough on faith. In his view, James' emphasis on works endangered the doctrine of justification by faith alone that other books of the New Testament taught and that the apostle Paul repeatedly discussed in his letters (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16). Martin Luther's view is echoed by Martin Dibelius who suggests that James is writing to correct Paul's view of faith without works in James 2:14–24.¹¹

However, Paul and James are not in conflict with each other, although they were discussing the same topic of justification from the perspective of faith and works, using the same Old Testament text. Luke Timothy Johnson, after carefully comparing Paul and James, concludes, "There is no compelling reason to suppose that either had the other in mind."¹² James teaches the inseparability of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, in which the theme of practical holiness is a key part.

⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 164.

⁶ Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 10.

⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 50.

⁸ Wright, "Truth with a Mission: Reading All Scripture Missiologically," 5. Capitalization for emphasis is the author's, not mine.

⁹ Johannes Nissen, "Testament in Mission: The Use of the New Methodological and Hermeneutical Reflections," *Mission Studies* 21, no. 2 (2004): 167, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1573383042653695>.

¹⁰ E. Theodore Bachmann, ed., *Luther's Works: Word and Sacrament I*, American Edition, vol. 35 (United States of America: Fortress Press, 1987), 362.

¹¹ Martin Dibelius, *James*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 174–80.

¹² Luke Timothy Johnson, *Brother of Jesus, Friend of God: Studies in the Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2004), 17.

MISSIONAL VALUE OF JAMES

Because James lacks explicit or implicit mission command, many writers dismiss James from a discussion of missional theology. Donald Senior concludes that the Hebrews, James, Jude, and 2 Peter "offer little material that bears directly on the issue of mission."¹³ Andreas J. Köstenberger, in his treatment of mission in the General Epistles, contends that the contribution of the Epistle of James to mission is not "substantial."¹⁴ Similarly, Johannes Nissen ignores the missional value of the Epistle of James by prioritizing the Epistle of Hebrews and 1 Peter among the General Epistles.¹⁵

In a recent work, Joel B. Green explored the motif of mission in James. "James invites reflection on what it means for the church to be a missionary outpost in a world whose patterns and conventions are out of step with God's mission."¹⁶ Green has established a strong foundation for reading James in a missional context.

HOLINESS AND MISSION: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

It is important to clarify the concepts of "holiness" and "mission" for their use in James. These concepts may raise questions that require answers. Is there a holiness theme in James? Does James address the theme of God's mission, or does he anywhere compel his audience to carry out missionary activity to reach their unbelieving neighbors? How does holiness relate to mission? These are legitimate questions. Direct and indirect answers will be provided as we explore the meaning of holiness and mission from a biblical perspective.

The popular notions of holiness and mission each emphasize a single aspect. For instance, the word *holiness* is viewed in terms of cleanliness (purity) or perfection. The word *mission* is also viewed in terms of crossing borders and cultures to evangelize the unevangelized. These are popular understandings of holiness and mission. But, as I will describe below, the Bible presents the concept of holiness and mission as each having two senses.

In the case of holiness, the Bible presents it in two key aspects: separateness from that which is common or ordinary and an ethical aspect in the sense of holy character. In the case of mission, the Bible also gives two key aspects: the *missio Dei* and missions in the sense of the church's missionary activity. When these aspects are properly understood, the plausibility of reading James missionally from the perspective of holiness and mission becomes clear.

HOLINESS

The English words "holy" and "holiness" are derived from the Biblical Hebrew word קָדוֹשׁ (*qadosh*), literally meaning "holy." The Hebrew root word קדש (*qdsh*) has other word groups apart from קָדוֹשׁ (*qadosh*). Our focus is on this one: קָדוֹשׁ (*qadosh*), "holy." The Septuagint (LXX) translates the Hebrew word groups of קדש (*qdsh*) with the Greek root word of ἅγ (*hag*). In this case, the Greek equivalent of קָדוֹשׁ (*qadosh*) is ἅγιος (*hagios*, "holy"). The New Testament uses ἅγιος (*hagios*) with its Old Testament background for the concept of holy and holiness.¹⁷

¹³ Donald Senior, "Witness and Mission: The Remaining Books of the New Testament," in *The Foundations for Mission*, ed. Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983), 309.

¹⁴ Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Mission in the General Epistles," in *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*, eds. William J. Larkin and Joel F. Williams (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 190.

¹⁵ Johannes Nissen and Johannes Nissen, *New Testament and Mission: Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives* (Frankfurt am Main ; New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 143.

¹⁶ Joel B. Green, "Reading James Missionally," in *Reading the Bible Missionally*, ed. Michael W. Goheen, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), chap.10.

¹⁷ M. C. Lyons, "Holiness" in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016).

HOLINESS AS SEPARATION

When holiness is applied to God, the central concept is his otherness. Holiness is His identity or divinity, used to refer to "the absoluteness, majesty, and awfulness of the Creator in His distinction from the creature."¹⁸ This is a clear indication that "only God is holy, there is nothing either within humans or on earth that is inherently holy."¹⁹

When holiness is applied to humans and other things, the central thought is that they are not inherently holy. For them, the lack of holiness is a result of being separated from God. This separation is not merely physical but shows a lack of belonging to God, participating in his mission, and reflecting his holy character before the world. That is the key to understanding the practical nature of holiness.

Nevertheless, the audience addressed by James is a holy people because of God's redemptive work through His Son Jesus Christ, who saved them. James affirms this in the beginning of his letter (1:18 and 2:1).

HOLINESS AS DISPLAYING HOLY CHARACTER (ETHICAL ASPECT)

The other aspect of holiness is the ethical dimension. God's holy characteristics—love and righteousness—are central concepts in the Bible. According to Kent Brower, "God reveals his holiness in action."²⁰ Hence, believers "are called to be holy as God is holy, reflecting the holy character of the triune God."²¹ The call to be holy as God is holy is a call to love one's neighbor and promote justice (Lev 19:2; Exod 19:5–6; 1 Pet 1:15–16; 2:9–10). To live a holy life is to participate in God's mission by reflecting His being before the world.

James' ethical concerns in his Epistle call on his audience to reveal God by displaying holy characteristics—love, justice, and solidarity with the poor. These are not merely theoretical concepts but practical matters that must be lived out in action. In 2:8, James quotes Leviticus 19:9, but most of the ethical concerns in his Epistle seem to allude to the entire chapter of Leviticus 19. His call to his audience is to practice love and justice as people of God through treating one's neighbor in love, showing charity to the poor, and administering justice to the oppressed.

MISSION AND MISSIONS

In defining the term "mission," there are also two key concepts. As indicated in the sections above, there is a conceptual difference between mission (singular) and missions (plural). David Bosch defines the term "mission" as "refers primarily to the *Missio Dei* (God's mission) that is, God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate."²² Mission is primarily about God. Similarly, Michael Barram, commenting on the biblical understanding of mission, writes, "The source, motivation, character, and ongoing vitality of the church's mission is rooted ultimately in the *missio Dei*."²³

¹⁸ J. C. Lambert, "Holiness" ed. James Orr et al., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), 1403–1404.

¹⁹ J. E. Hartley, "Holy and Holiness, Clean and Unclean," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. Alexander and Baker (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 420.

²⁰ Kent Brower, "Holiness," in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel B. Green et al., (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011), 362.

²¹ Kent Brower, "Holiness," in Green et al., Jacqueline E. Laspely, Rebekah Miles, and Allen Verhey, 362.

²² David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Twentieth-anniversary ed, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 21.

²³ Michael Barram, "The Bible, Mission, and Social Location: Toward a Missional Hermeneutic," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 61, no. 1 (January 2007): 43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096430006100106>.

According to Bosch, the definition of the word "missions" denotes the church's involvement in the ultimate mission of God. He defines the word as "Missions (the missions ecclesiae: the missionary ventures of the church), refers to particular forms, related to specific times, places, or needs, of participation in the *missio Dei*."²⁴

Misconception arises when the two concepts are separated from each other. The traditional approach was to look for scriptural texts as proof texts for doing missionary activities. The mission becomes primarily about what the church does. Boubakar Sanou states, "This misconception has often caused the Christian church to see itself both as initiator of and authority for mission."²⁵ However, mission is primarily about who God is and what He has done and is doing in the world he created.

When reading the Epistle of James missionally we are acknowledging the bold and correct claim of Christopher Wright that "the whole Bible is itself a 'missional' phenomenon."²⁶ That means "The Scripture as a whole is the product of, and witness to, the ultimate mission of God."²⁷ Hence, the Epistle of James as part of Scripture is "a product of, and witness to, the ultimate mission of God."²⁸

THE MANIFESTATION OF GENUINE CHRISTIAN FAITH: JAMES 1:26–27

Genuine faith is the central theme in the Epistle of James. Faith should be manifested in practical life, both in the aspect of personal ethical purity and communal ethical responsibilities. Dan G. McCartney has rightly concluded that "faith without ethical consequences is an implicit denial of the reality of that faith."²⁹

The ground of genuine faith and ethical life is that James' audiences are saved by faith in Christ (2:1) and are a new creation (1:18, 21). Hence, they are required to live their daily life as a community of faith by manifesting both individual purity and communal responsibilities. They should show their Christianity in the world in which they live (geographical location). Only genuine faith manifesting itself in practical ethical life can transform the culture, faith, and values of the fallen world, which is the goal of God's mission.

James 1:26–27 is a text that serves as a hinge for the themes of genuine faith and ethics that are addressed in the entire Epistle. It summarizes the faith and ethical themes James raised as concerns in 1:1–25 and chapters 2–5. The text addresses both themes of faith and ethics as an individual and communal concern.

The noun *θησκαρία* "religion" occurs four times in the NT; two of them used positively and the other two negatively. Acts 26:5 and James 1:27a use the term positively for the correct practice of faith. In Colossians 2:18, "religion" is used negatively for angel worship, and in James 1:26c, it is used negatively for a faith that lacks practical evidence. The adjective *θησκαρός* "religious" only occurs here. The passage contrasts Christian faith that does and does not manifest itself in practical ethical life. The latter is described as a "worthless religion", and the former as a "religion pure and undefiled before God" (Jas 1: 26-27).

MARKS OF WORTHLESS RELIGION

The conditional sentence in 1:26 describes the characteristics of the Christian faith that do not manifest themselves in practical life. The conditional sentence is structured in two parts: the "if" and the "then" clauses.

²⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 21.

²⁵ Boubakar Sanou, "Missio Dei as Hermeneutical Key for Scriptural Interpretation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 56, no. 2 (2018): 308.

²⁶ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 5.

²⁷ Wright, 5.

²⁸ Wright, 5.

²⁹ Dan G. McCartney, *James: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 71.

The "if" part: "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart,"

The "then" part: "This person's religion is worthless."

The relation of the "if" part, the protasis, and the "then" part, the apodosis, is "evidence–inference."³⁰ The protasis provides the evidence or ground that characterizes Christian faith that does not manifest itself in practical life or that does not result in ethical life:

- *One thinks of himself* (δοκεῖ from δοκέω "think or suppose") – a person on his self-judgment supposes himself as religious (θρησκός) – that is, "the person has the outward practice of religious activity and so considers himself pious."³¹ The outward religious activities in view might be those religiously observable activities such as prayer, fasting, etc.
- *One does not bridle his tongue* – the person thinks or considers himself religious but does not control his tongue. The concern here is speech ethics, the manifestation of faith in practical life.
- *One only deceives his heart* – ἀλλὰ ἀπατῶν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ "but [*only*] deceives his heart." This person only deceives himself since his assumed faith can only impact others when it is manifested in his practical ethical life (speech ethics). James discusses speech ethics in 1:19–20 in terms of controlling anger and 3:1–12 in terms of cursing others.

The "then" part, the apodosis (the implication or conclusion) shows that the person's religious practices apart from ethical consequences are useless or empty – μάταιος "worthless."

MARKS OF TRUE RELIGION

In 1:26–27, James describes three marks of true religion—the ethical life of Christian faith.

- controlling the tongue (speech ethics),
 - visiting orphans and widows (social-ethical responsibilities), and
 - "to keep oneself unstained from the world" (personal ethical purity).
- All three marks of true religion are discussed in the entire Epistle.

Speech Ethics (1:19–20, 26; 3:1–12; 4:11–12; 5:9, 12)

The Greek word γλῶσσα "tongue" occurs five times in James. The tongue, as an organ of speech, is characterized as an "author of many sins, Jm. 3:1–12 (cf. also Jm. 1:26; 1Pet. 3:10=Ps. 34:13)."³² In the history of interpretation, scholars have suggested various kinds of sins. In the words of Dale C. Allison, "Readers have filled in the blank."³³ However, in James, the sin of the tongue has to do with various kinds of speech ethics. The concern is the inconsistency between what one says and how one lives in practice. James is against the use of the tongue that incites the whole body for violent action.

James introduces the theme of speech ethics in 1:19–20 with a discussion of anger issues. In the preceding section, 1:16–18, he discussed rebirth "by the word of truth," and in the following section, 1:22–25, he discussed the necessity of doing or obeying the word of God. Hence, being born again by the

³⁰ Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 305.

³¹ Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 101.

³² Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey W. Bromily, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. I (Grand Rapids, Mich., Exeter: Eerdmans; Paternoster, 1985), 721.

³³ Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 346.

word of truth and hearing the word of God must result in speech ethics, being "slow to anger." Hearing God's word and anger that leads to violent action do not go together.

In 1:26, James stresses the issue of controlling the tongue, which is a main concern in the entire Epistle. In this verse, James teaches the religious person to show his religiousness through observable speech ethics, "bridling his tongue." Religiousness and an uncontrolled tongue do not go together.

In 3:1–12, James begins with a warning addressing those involved in teaching regarding the use of the tongue and speech ethics (3:1–2). What they teach and how they live by what they teach are concerns here. They should be self-disciplined, maintaining consistency between what they teach and how they live. That way, they will show maturity (τέλειος "perfect"). Being a teacher of the word of God and an uncontrolled tongue do not go together.

Another speech ethics issue in 3:1–12 is that of blessing God and cursing people made in the image of God. Blessing God and cursing people made in God's image do not go together. James warns his audiences against such an inconsistent life (3:11–13).

In 4:11–12 and 5:9, James warns against slandering (speaking evil against someone) and judging others. Obeying the law of God and slandering a brother do not go together. The law of God commands loving one's neighbor (Lev 19:18; Jas 2:8).

In 5:12, James warns against making an oath. Instead of vowing, he promotes the ethics of speaking the truth. A life of integrity consistent with genuine faith is more important than a mere verbal oath. This warning alludes to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5:34.

Social Ethical Responsibility (1:27; 2:2, 14–17)

From the internal evidence, it is evident that James' audience was going through various kinds of trials (1:2)—the test of their faith to produce steadfastness (1:12). But what was the source of the trial testing their faith? What is making them react contrary to their Christian faith? James' audience was not going through any external persecution; there was no internal division and no heretical issue. Among other things, their source of trial appears to be the internal oppression of the poor by the rich (2:6–7; 5:1–6) and economic tension (1:9–11, 27; 2:2, 14–17). James hints regarding the source of their trial in various places in the Epistle. However, these two stand out to be key in his Epistle.

In 1:9–11, James introduces his theme of the poor and the rich, which he will address fully in chapters 2 and 5. The Greek word ταπεινός "humble" is used two times in James, in 1:9 and 4:6. In 1:9, it is used to refer to the person's economic low status in society, "low degree" (ASV). In 4:6, the usage refers to any humble person. In 1:9, the concern is on the attitude towards possessing material wealth. The Greek word πλούσιος "rich" occurs five times. In 1:9, James exhorts the poor to boast about their present status in Christ, knowing the coming of eschatological glory. In 1:11, he warns the rich not to boast in earthly material possession of wealth nor to oppress the brother in a lowly status (5:1–6). Material wealth should not be a means of oppressing the disadvantaged but of service and justice to others. Peter H. Davids well stated that "the wealthy Christian is instructed to take no pride in possessions or position but rather to think of his self-abasement in identifying with Christ (i.e., repenting) and Christ's poor people."³⁴ Both material wealth and the person possessing it are temporary.

If 1:9–11 and 5:1–6 are about an attitude towards possession and the inappropriate use of material wealth, 2:1–13 is about the attitude towards the poor as a person. The ethical sin is favoritism. The community welcomes the rich based on their material wealth possession. They are discriminating against the poor based on their impoverished status. In the community of faith, there should be no favoritism. Christian faith and favoritism do not go together. The royal command is "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (2:8; Lev 19:18). A true Christian community must deal with negative social divisions. They should welcome the poor and rich not based on their social or material status but as persons created in the image of God. Moreover, they should manifest the love of Christ by caring for the needy.

³⁴ Davids, *The Epistle of James*, 77.

In 1:22–25, James raised the issue of those hearing the word of God but not acting ethically. He urged the audience to hear and do the word of God. Genuine faith must manifest itself in action. In the sections 1:26–27 and 2:14–26, the main concern is faith and action. In 1:26–27, he indicated the key areas of concern regarding faith and action: faith and controlled speech (1:26), faith and fulfilling social responsibility (1:27b), and faith and keeping personal holiness (1:27c).

In 1:27, James describes the ethical aspect of true religion as “pure and undefiled.” The standard of purity and defilement is not in the eyes of the person, as in 1:26, but “before God the Father.” The action that should be consistent with genuine faith is “to visit orphans and widows in their affliction.” According to Deuteronomy 10:18, God “executes justice for the fatherless and the widows and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.” God’s love for the fatherless and widows manifests in meeting their need for food and clothing. In 1:27 and 2:14–26, James stresses the incompatibility of professing faith and neglecting to care for the physical needs of the poor. Such a faith, not accompanied by observable ethical social responsibility, is dead.

Another area of ethical and social responsibility that James addresses is prayer and responsibility for one another. In 5:16, he discusses the issue of faith and action concerning confessing sins to one another and praying for one another. The point here is that the community of faith must confess wrongs (sins) committed against each other. One who professes faith must reconcile with their brother (Matt 5:24). The community of faith must also pray for one another for the healing of physical illness. Finally, in 5:19–20, James exhorts his audience regarding mutual responsibility to help one another spiritually. If a brother strays from either orthodoxy or orthopraxy, there is a mutual responsibility to bring them back in repentance.

James not only discusses communal ethics and mutual responsibility but also addresses personal ethical responsibility. Christian ethics are manifested not only in what one does for others but also in one's character. Faith and maintaining personal holiness must go hand in hand. The Greek words ἄσπιλος (1:27; from ἄσπιλος "unstained") and κόσμου (4:4; from κόσμος "world" are used in a moral sense. To maintain consistency between faith and action regarding personal holiness, one must live a morally blameless life in a world that is morally polluted. One must guard oneself (τηρεῖν) from any moral evil in the world.

CONCLUSION

Although some scholars tend to neglect the Epistle of James in their theological and missional discussion, this paper has demonstrated that the Epistle of James holds importance for both theology and mission. The central themes of the Epistle—faith and action, or orthodoxy and orthopraxy—serve to summon the community of faith to become the light of the world and the salt of the earth. James is not merely encouraging his audience to maintain consistency between faith and practical living; rather, the aim is to engage in God's mission by acting as witnesses through the display of a holy life within their community. When the concepts of holiness and mission are understood from a biblical perspective, as attempted in this paper, the missiological reading of the Epistle of James becomes unmistakably clear.

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