

# JAMES

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JAMES

This epistle is called “general”, because not written to any particular person, as the epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon are; nor to any particular churches, as the epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, etc. but to the believing Jews in general, wherever they were. The author of it is James; and whereas there were two of this name, who were the apostles of Christ; some have thought it was written by one, and some by another: some think it was written by James the son of Zebedee, and brother of John, which is favoured by the Syriac version, which to this epistle, and the following, premises these words;

“the three epistles of the three apostles, before whose eyes our Lord transfigured himself, that is, James, and Peter, and John.”

Now, that James, who was present at the transfiguration of Christ, was James the son of Zebedee: but neither the time, nor occasion, nor matter of this epistle, seem to agree with him, for he was put to death by Herod, about the year 44, (~~44~~ Acts 12:1,2), whereas this epistle was written, as some think, about the year 60, or as others, 63; and it seems pretty manifest that it must be written after the Gospel had been spread in the Gentile world, and was received by the Jews, who were scattered abroad in it; and after many hypocrites had crept into the churches, and many false teachers, and vain boasters, and wicked men, had arisen among them: it seems therefore more agreeable to ascribe this epistle to James, the son of Alphaeus, sometimes called the brother of our Lord, and who was present at the assembly at Jerusalem, when the necessity of the Gentiles' circumcision was debated, (~~45~~ Acts 15:1-27) and is the same whom Eusebius <sup>f1</sup> calls James the just, and Oblias; and who seems to have resided at Jerusalem, and to have been the bishop, or overseer of the church there; and therefore in character writes this epistle to the Jews, in the several parts of the world: nor need there be any doubt of the authenticity of it. Eusebius indeed says <sup>f2</sup>, that it had been accounted spurious by some, and that not many of the ancient writers had made mention of it: but he himself says, that it was publicly read in most churches; and certain it is, that some

very early writers have respect unto it. Irenaeus<sup>f3</sup> manifestly refers to it, and so does Tertullian<sup>f4</sup>; and it is expressly mentioned by Origen<sup>f5</sup> among the canonical books of Scripture. The objections against it are of no weight, which are taken from the seeming disagreement between the Apostle Paul, and the writer of this epistle, concerning the doctrine of justification; and from his calling the law the perfect law of liberty, and insisting so much on the doctrine of works; all which will be seen to be agreeable to the other parts of Scripture, and easily reconciled with them; nor is there anything in it unworthy of an apostle and an inspired writer. The occasion of it seems to be partly the troubles and persecutions which attended the saints for the sake of Christ and the Gospel; and the design of it is to encourage them to patience under them, and to wait and hope for the speedy coming of Christ; and partly the evil practices of some that boasted of their faith and knowledge, though they lived very dissolute lives: and the view of the apostle is to show, that faith, without the fruits of righteousness, is not genuine; and he very largely in it exhorts to several duties very becoming Christians, and inveighs against several vices, which were scandalous to them.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO JAMES 1

In this chapter, after the inscription and salutation, the apostle instructs the saints he writes to, how to behave under afflictions, and in every state of life; teaches them not to impute their sins to God, but to themselves; directs them in hearing the word, and cautions against self-deception in religion. The inscription and salutation are in (~~S000~~James 1:1) in which the author of the epistle is described by his name and office; and the persons it is written to, by the tribes of Israel they belonged to, and by the condition in which they were scattered about in the world, to whom the apostle wishes all grace. And as they were in an afflicted state, he begins with an exhortation to rejoice in their afflictions; because hereby faith was tried, and that produced patience, and patience being perfect, is the way to be complete, and want nothing, (~~S000~~James 1:2-4), but if any wanted wisdom, how to behave under such exercises, he advises to apply to God for it, from whom it may be expected, since he is the giver of it, and gives it to all, and that liberally, and does not upbraid with the former conduct, (~~S000~~James 1:5) but then such should ask in faith, or otherwise it cannot be thought they should receive, and besides would justly deserve the characters of fluctuating and unstable persons, (~~S000~~James 1:6-8). And the exhortations the apostle had given, he observes, suited all sorts of persons, poor and rich; the one who is exalted amidst his poverty, and the other who is mean, and frail, and mortal, amidst all his riches; which is illustrated by the flower of the grass falling off and perishing, (~~S000~~James 1:9-11). And upon the whole, he concludes the blessedness of the man that endures affliction patiently, since a crown of life is promised him, and he will receive it, (~~S002~~James 1:12) and from external temptations or afflictions, the apostle proceeds to internal ones, temptations to sin; and denies them to be of God, and imputes them to the lusts of men, and gives a very accurate account of the beginning, progress, and finishing of sin by man; and observes, that to place sin to the account of God, and not man, is a very great error, (James 1:13-16), which he proves from the pure and holy nature of God; and from the good and perfect gifts, which all, and only, come from him; and instances in regeneration, which is of his will, and by

his word, and is the beginning and spring of all good in man, (~~5017~~James 1:17,18). And having mentioned the word, as a means of that grace, he gives some rules about hearing it; that it should be heard with eagerness, and received with meekness; and whatsoever is contrary thereunto should be avoided; as a forwardness to be teachers of it: wrath and anger at the doctrines of it, which do not work the righteousness of God; and all impurity and naughtiness of the mind, which must render it inattentive to it; and the rather all this should be regarded, since the word is the ingrafted word, and able to save the souls of men, (~~5019~~James 1:19-21) and particular care should be had, that what is heard is put in practice, or otherwise it will be a self-deception; and such will be like a man that beholds his face in a glass goes away, and forgets what sort of a man he is; whereas, if a man looks into the glass of the Gospel hears the word attentively, remembers what he hears, and continues in it, he finds many blessed advantages in so doing, (~~5022~~James 1:22-25) and then the apostle distinguishes between a vain religion, and a pure one; a vain religion is only a seeming one, and may be known to be so by a man's having no guard upon his tongue; wherefore if he thinks himself religious, he is mistaken and his heart deceived, (~~5025~~James 1:26) but pure and undefiled religion, which is so in the sight of God, shows itself in a holy life and conversation in general, and particularly in visiting and assisting widows and orphans in distress, (~~5027~~James 1:27).

**Ver. 1.** *James, a servant of God*, etc.] That is, of God the Father; not by creation only, as every man is; nor merely by calling grace, as is every regenerate person; but by office, as a preacher of the Gospel, being one that served God in the Gospel of his Son, and was an apostle of Christ; nor is this any sufficient objection to his being one, since others of the apostles so style themselves:

*and of the Lord Jesus Christ*; the Ethiopic version reads this in connection with the former clause, without the copulative “and”, “James, the servant of God, our Lord Jesus Christ”: and so some consider the copulative as explanative of who is meant by God, even the Lord Jesus Christ: but it seems best to understand them as distinct; and that this apostle was not only the servant of God the Father, but of his Son Jesus Christ, and that in the same sense, referring to his office as an apostle of Christ, and minister of the word:

*to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad*; by whom are meant believing Jews, who were of the several tribes of Israel, and which were in number “twelve”, according to the number and names of the twelve patriarchs, the sons of Jacob; and these were not the Christian Jews, who were scattered abroad upon the persecution raised at the death of Stephen, (~~4000~~Acts 8:1,4 11:19) but they were the posterity of those who had been dispersed in former captivities, by the Assyrians and others, and who remained in the several countries whither they were carried, and never returned. The Jews say <sup>f6</sup>, that the ten tribes will never return, and that they will have no part nor portion in the world to come; but these the Gospel met with in their dispersion, and by it they were effectually called and converted, and are the same that Peter writes to, (~~6000~~1 Peter 1:1,2) (~~6000~~2 Peter 1:1 3:1). And thus we read of an hundred and forty and four thousand sealed of all the tribes of Israel, (~~6000~~Revelation 7:4) and to these the apostle here sends greeting; that is, his Christian salutation, wishing them all happiness and prosperity, in soul and body, for time and eternity; and it includes all that grace, mercy, and peace, mentioned in the usual forms of salutation by the other apostles. The same form is used in (~~4153~~Acts 15:23) and since it was James that gave the advice there, which the rest of the apostles and elders came into, it is highly probable that the epistles sent to the Gentiles were dictated by him; and the likeness of the form of salutation may confirm his being the writer of this epistle.

**Ver. 2.** *My brethren*, etc.] Not only according to the flesh, he being a Jew as they were; but in a spiritual sense, they being born again of the same grace, belonging to the same family and household of faith, and having the same Father, and being all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus:

*count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations*; not the temptations of Satan, or temptations to sin; for these cannot be matter of joy, but grief; these are fiery darts, and give a great deal of uneasiness and trouble; but afflictions and persecutions for the sake of the Gospel, which are so called here and elsewhere, because they are trials of the faith of God's people, and of other graces of the Spirit of God. God by these tempts his people, as he did Abraham, when he called him to sacrifice his son; he thereby tried his faith, fear, love, and obedience; so by afflictions, God tries the graces of his people; not that he might know them, for he is not ignorant of them, but that they might be made manifest to others; and these are “divers”: many are the afflictions of the righteous; through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom; it is a great fight of afflictions which they endure, as

these believers did; their trials came from different quarters; they were persecuted by their countrymen the Jews, and were distressed by the Gentiles, among whom they lived; and their indignities and reproaches were many; and their sufferings of different sorts, as confiscation of goods, imprisonment of body, banishment, scourgings, and death in various shapes: and these they “fall” into; not by chance, nor altogether at an unawares, or unexpectedly; but they fell into them through the wickedness and malice of their enemies, and did not bring them upon themselves through any crime or enormity they were guilty of: and when this was their case, the apostle exhorts them to count it all joy, or matter of joy, of exceeding great joy, even of the greatest joy; not that these afflictions were joyous in themselves, but in their circumstances, effects, and consequences; as they tried, and exercised, and improved the graces of the Spirit, and worked for their good, spiritual and eternal, and produced in them the peaceable fruit of righteousness; and as they were attended with the presence and Spirit of God, and of glory; and as they made for, and issued in the glory of God; and because of that great reward in heaven which would follow them; (see ~~AM11~~ Matthew 5:11,12 ~~AM14~~ 1 Peter 4:14). The Jews have a saying<sup>17</sup>,

“whoever rejoices in afflictions that come upon him, brings salvation to the world.”

**Ver. 3.** *Knowing this*, etc.] By experience; as everyone that is trained up in the school of affliction does: the apostle appeals to the saints, to whom he writes, for the truth of what he was about to say; and which he gives as a reason why they should rejoice in afflictions, because it is a known fact,

*that the trying of your faith worketh patience*: two things afflictions do when sanctified; one is, they try faith, the truth of it, and make it appear to be true, genuine, and precious, like gold tried in the fire; (see ~~AM06~~ 1 Peter 1:6,7) and the other is, that they produce patience: saints being inured to afflictions, become by degrees more patient under them; whence it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth: this phrase may be understood, both of faith, which being tried by afflictions, produces patience; for where the one is in exercise, the other is also, and both are necessary under afflictive providences; and also of afflictions, which try faith, and being sanctified by the Spirit of God, work patience, which is a fruit of the Spirit; for otherwise the effect of them is impatience; and this agrees with the Apostle Paul in (~~AM03~~ Romans 5:3,4).

**Ver. 4.** *But let patience have her perfect work*, etc.] Or effect; or be brought unto perfection; which may denote both the sincerity and continuance of it unto the end, with constancy: patience may be said to be perfect, when it appears to be real and sincere, and not dissembled; for as there may be a feigned faith, a dissembled love, and an hypocritical hope, so likewise a mere show of patience: and certain it is, that as there is a patience which is commendable, there is one that is not, (<sup><4012></sup>1 Peter 2:20). And this phrase may also design the constant exercise of this grace to the end; for he that endures, or is patient, and continues so unto the end, shall be saved, and enjoy that perfection of glory and happiness expressed in the next clause:

*that ye may be perfect and entire*, wanting nothing; which cannot be understood of the saints in this present life; only as they are in Christ, and in a comparative sense; or as perfection may denote sincerity, and uprightness; or of a perfection of parts, but not of degrees; for the saints are very imperfect in themselves, and are very far from being complete in soul, body, and spirit; and want many things, and are wanting in many things, both in the exercise of grace, and in the discharge of duty; but when patience has had its perfect work, and has been tried to the uttermost, and is found right, and has held out to the end; then shall the saints be perfect in holiness and happiness, and be entire, whole, and complete; as they will be in the resurrection morn, both in soul and body, and will want no good thing, and will be free from every sorrow, nor will they be deficient in any service; and to this sense agrees (<sup><5012></sup>James 1:12).

**Ver. 5.** *If any of you lack wisdom*, etc.] This shows that the perfection before spoken of is not to be understood as in this life, since the apostle immediately supposes lack of wisdom in them; for this is not said in a form of doubting, whether they wanted it or not, but rather as supposing, and taking it for granted that they did; and in the first, and primary sense of the words, it intends wisdom to behave aright under temptations or afflictions. Saints often want wisdom to consider God as the author of them, and not look upon them as matters of chance, or impute them merely to second causes; but to regard them as coming from the hand of God, and as his hand upon them, as Job did; who does not ascribe his calamities to the thieving Chaldeans and Sabeans, to the boisterous wind, and to the malice of Satan, but to God: they want wisdom to observe the sovereignty of God in them, and bow unto it, and be still, and know that he is God, who does all things well and wisely; and likewise to see and know that all are in love,

and in very faithfulness, and for good; as well as to see his name, to hear his rod, and him that has appointed it, his voice in it, his mind and meaning, and what he designs by it; as likewise to learn the useful lessons under it, and particularly to take the cross well, to bear it patiently, and even to count it all joy, and reckon it to be right, necessary, and useful: it requires much wisdom to learn all this, and act up to it. Moreover, this may be applied to all other cases, in which wisdom is wanted; men want wisdom to conduct them in the common affairs of life, and especially the people of God; for the children of the world are wiser in their generation, for themselves and posterity, and in the management of worldly affairs, than the children of light; and also to observe the providences of God, and the footsteps of Providence, and to follow them; and likewise to make a right use of providences, and behave suitably under them, and not be lifted up too much in prosperity, nor be cast down, and too much distressed in adversity; but to consider, that the one is set against the other, and both work together for good. Saints have need of wisdom in things spiritual; they want more grace, which is the truest wisdom, and a larger knowledge of the Gospel, which is the wisdom of God, the hidden wisdom of God; and they lack wisdom to know how to walk towards them that are without, and towards them that are within, so as becomes the Gospel of Christ: and as this is more or less the case of everyone

*let him ask of God* wisdom; of God the Father, who is the only wise God, who has abounded in creation, in providence, and, above all, in redemption and grace, in all wisdom and prudence; and of his Son Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of God, and has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in him; and of the Spirit of God, who is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and all divine things:

*that giveth to all men liberally*; God is the giver of all good things, in nature, providence, and grace; every good and perfect gift comes from him, and therefore he, and he only, should be applied unto: and he gives to “all men” the bounties of his providence; and to all that ask, and call upon him in sincerity, the riches of his grace; even to Jews and Gentiles, high and low, rich and poor, greater or lesser sinners; all which he gives “liberally”, readily, and at once, freely and cheerfully, and largely and abundantly; not grudgingly, sparingly, and with a strait hand, but with an open one, and in a very extensive manner.



*And upbraideth not*; with former sins and transgressions, with former miscarriages and misconduct; or with former kindnesses, suggesting that he had given largely already, and his favours had been despised or abused; or he had been treated with ingratitude and neglect; in which manner sometimes men put off those that apply unto them, but so does not God; wherefore every word here used is encouraging to go to God for wisdom: yea, it follows,

*and it shall be given him*; God has said it, Christ has promised it, and the apostle might, with certainty, say it after them, and all experience confirms the truths of it; (see <sup><400></sup>Matthew 7:7,8 <sup><643></sup>John 14:13,14,16,23).

**Ver. 6.** *But let him ask in faith*, etc.] Not only in the faith of the divine Being that God is; but in the faith of the promises he has made; and in the faith of his power and faithfulness to perform them; and in the faith of this, that whatever is asked, according to the will of God, and is for his glory, and his people's good, shall be given.

*Nothing wavering*; about the thing asked for, whether it is right or no to ask for it; for that should be settled before it is asked for; nor about the power of God to do it; nor about his will, in things he has declared he will do; nor about his faithfulness to his promises; nor at all questioning but what is proper, suitable, and convenient, will be given in God's own time and way.

*For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed*; he is troubled, restless, unquiet, and impatient; and he is fickle, inconstant, unstable, and unsettled; and is easily carried away with every wind of doctrine, temptation, and lust.

**Ver. 7.** *For let not that man think*, etc.] Imagine, conclude, or please himself with such thoughts,

*that he shall receive anything from the Lord*; wisdom, or anything else, he is seeking after; for wanting faith, he has nothing to receive with; faith is the grace, which receives the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and all grace from him; which receives a justifying righteousness, pardon of sin, adoption of children, and even the everlasting inheritance, at least, the right unto it; wherefore those who have not faith, as the wavering man, cannot receive any thing.

**Ver. 8.** *A double minded man*, etc.] A man of two souls, or of a double heart, that speaks and asks with an heart, and an heart, as in (<sup><913D></sup>Psalm 12:2) who halts between two opinions, and is at an uncertainty what to do or say, and is undetermined what to ask for; or who is not sincere and upright in his requests, who asks for one thing, and means another, and asks amiss, and with an ill design; does not call upon God in truth, and in the sincerity of his soul; draws nigh to him with his mouth, and honours him with his lips, but his heart is far from him. Such an one is

*unstable in all his ways*; he is confused in his mind; restless in his thoughts, unsettled in his designs and intentions; inconstant in his petitions; uncertain in his notions and opinion of things; and very variable in his actions, and especially in matters of religion; he is always changing, and never at a point, but at a continual uncertainty, both in a way of thinking and doing: he never continues long either in an opinion, or in a practice, but is ever shifting and moving.

**Ver. 9.** *Let the brother of low degree*, etc.] By “the brother” is meant, not one in a natural, but in a spiritual relation; one of Christ's brethren, and who is of that family that is named of him; of the household of faith, and is in church communion: and whereas he is said to be of “low degree”, or “humble”, this regards not the affection of his mind, or his conduct and deportment, he being meek and lowly, and clothed with humility, as every brother is, or ought to be; but his outward state and condition, being, as to the things of this world, poor, and mean in his outward circumstances, and so humbled and afflicted. This appears from the rich man, who, in the next verse, is opposed unto him, and distinguished from him; (see <sup><96D></sup>Psalm 62:9) such an one is advised to

*rejoice in that he is exalted*; or to “glory in his exaltation”; in that high estate, to which he is advanced; for a person may be very low and mean, as to his worldly circumstances, and yet be very high, and greatly exalted in a spiritual sense: and this height of honour and grandeur, of which he may boast and glory, amidst his outward poverty, lies in his high birth and descent, being born from above, and of God, and belonging to his family; in being an adopted Son of God, and so an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ, and of the heavenly inheritance and kingdom; in the present riches of grace he is possessed of, as justifying, pardoning, and sanctifying grace; and in the high titles he bears, as besides the new name, the name better than that of sons and daughters of the greatest potentate, even that

of a Son of the Lord God Almighty, his being a King, and a priest unto God, and for whom a kingdom, crown, and throne are prepared; and also in the company he daily keeps, and is admitted to, as of God, and Christ, and the holy angels: and this height of honour have all the saints, be they ever so poor in this world, who can vie with the greatest of princes for sublimity and grandeur.

**Ver. 10.** *But the rich, in that he is made low*, etc.] That is, the rich brother; for there were rich men in the churches in those times, and which James often takes notice of in this epistle. Such an one should rejoice or glory in his lowness, or low estate; in the consideration of the low estate, out of which he was raised, by the good providence of God, and was not owing to any merit of his; and in the low estate into which he may be at present reduced, through the violence of persecution being stripped of all his riches for Christ's sake, of which he might make his boast, and count it his greatest glory; or in that low estate he may quickly expect he shall be brought into, either in the above manner, or by some calamity or another, and at least by death, which will put him upon a level with others: or this may have respect to the temper of his mind, which he has, through the grace of God, and the station he is in, in the church of God, being a brother, and no more than a brother, and upon an equal foot with the meanest member in it; and which yet is matter of rejoicing, that he is one, and that he is so blessed with the grace of humility, as not to lift up himself above others, not to mind high things, but to condescend to men of low estate; and such a deportment the apostle exhorts rich saints unto, from the consideration of the instability and inconstancy of worldly riches.

*Because, as the flower of the grass he shall pass away*; shortly, and suddenly; either he himself by death, or his riches at death, or before, and therefore are not to be gloried in; nor should the possessors of them be proud and haughty and elate themselves with them, but should behave humbly and modestly to their fellow creatures and Christians, as knowing that in a short time they will all be upon a par, or in an equal state; (see <sup><84></sup>Job 14:2 <sup><91></sup>Psalms 90:5,6 102:11 103:15,16). The metaphor here used is enlarged upon in the following verse, for the further illustration of the fickleness, perishing, and transitory nature of earthly enjoyments.

**Ver. 11.** *For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat*, etc.] As it is about the middle of the day, when it shines in its full strength, and its heat

is very great and scorching, especially in the summer season, and in hot climates:

*but it withereth the grass*; strikes it with heat, causes it to shrivel, and dries it up;

*and the flower thereof falleth*; drops off from it to the ground:

*and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth*; its form and colour, its glory and beauty, which were pleasant to the eye, are lost, and no more to be recovered. This shows, that earthly riches, like the flower of the field, have an outward show and glory in them, which attract the mind, and fix an attention to them for a while; they are gay and glittering, and look lovely, are pleasant to behold, and desirable to enjoy; but when the sun of persecution, or any other outward calamity arises, they are quickly destroyed, and are no more.

*So also shall the rich man fade away in his ways*; riches are uncertain things now, they often make themselves wings and flee away; they are things that are not, that are not solid and substantial they are a vain show; they sometimes fade away in a man's lifetime, before he dies; and he fades away, and comes to decay, amidst all the ways and means, designs and schemes, he forms and pursues, and all the actions and business he does; and if not, when he fades away, and dies amidst all his riches, his glory does not descend after him, but falls off from him, as the flower of the field before the heat of the sun.

**Ver. 12.** *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation*, etc.] Or affliction, which is designed by temptation, as in (<sup><small>S000</small>James 1:2) and the man that endures it is he that so bears it, and bears up under it, as not to be offended at it, and stumble in the ways of Christ, and fall away from the truth, and a profession of it, as temporary believers in a time of temptation do; but manfully and bravely stands up under it, and does not sink under the weight of it, or faint on account of it; and endures afflictions in such manner as not to murmur and repine at them, but is quiet and still, and bears them patiently and constantly, and so endures to the end. Such expect afflictions, and when they come, they are not moved by them, but, notwithstanding them, continue in the ways and work of the Lord; and such are happy persons; they are happy now, and shall be hereafter. Saints are happy under afflictions, and even on account of them, for they are tokens of God's love to them, and evidences of their sonship; and especially they are happy</sup>

under them, when they enjoy the presence of God in them, when they are instructive to them, and are saner, lifted, when they learn from them the useful lessons of faith, patience, humility, and resignation to the will of God, and are made more partakers of his holiness; and they will be happy hereafter, as follows. The Jews have a saying<sup>f8</sup> much like this,

“blessed” is the man, **wnwysnb dmw[ awhç**, “who stands in his temptation”, for there is no creature whom the holy blessed God does not tempt.”

For when he is tried; by the fire of afflictions, as gold is tried in the fire; when God hereby has tried what is in his heart, and the truth of grace in him, as faith, love, patience, etc. and has purged away his dross and tin, and has refined and purified him, as gold and silver are refined and purified in the furnace, or refining pot: and when being thus tried and proved, and found genuine, and comes forth as gold, after this state of temptation and affliction is over,

*he shall receive the crown of life*, eternal happiness, called a “crown”, because of the glory of it, which will be both upon the bodies and souls of believers to all eternity; and as suitable to their character, they being kings, and having a kingdom and thrones prepared for them; and in allusion to the crown that was given to the conquerors in the Olympic games: and it is called a “crown of life”, because it is for life, which an earthly crown is not always; and because it lies in eternal life, and is an everlasting crown; it is a crown of glory that fadeth not away, an incorruptible one; and differs from the corruptible crown given to the victors in the above mentioned games, which were made of fading herbs, and leaves of trees: and now the man that bears up under afflictions, and holds out unto the end, shall have this crown put upon him, and he shall “receive it”; not as merited by him, by his works or sufferings, for neither of them are worthy to be compared or mentioned with this crown of life and glory; but as the free gift of God, as it will be given him by the righteous Judge, as a reward of grace, and not of debt:

*which the Lord hath promised to them that love him*; either the Lord Jesus Christ, as in (<sup>4150</sup>Matthew 5:10,12 10:22) or else God the Father; the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, read, “God”; and the Alexandrian copy leaves out the word “Lord”, which may be supplied by the word God; (see <sup>5015</sup>James 2:5) and this promise he made before the world was, who cannot lie, nor deceive, and who is able to perform, and is

faithful, and will never suffer his faithfulness to fail; so that this happiness is certain, and may be depended upon: besides, the promise of this crown of life is in Christ, where all the promises are yea and amen; yea, the crown itself is in his hands, where it lies safe and secure for “them that love him”; either the Lord Jesus Christ, his person, his people, his truths, and ordinances, and his glorious appearing, (<sup><5048></sup>2 Timothy 4:8) or God the Father; not that their love is the cause of this crown of life, or eternal life, for then it would not be the free gift of God, as it is said to be; nor of the promise of it, for that was made before the world was, and when they had no love unto him; but this phrase is descriptive of the persons to whom God manifests his love now, admits to near communion and fellowship with himself, makes all things, even their afflictions, to work for their good, and whom he will cause to inherit substance, and will fill their treasures.

**Ver. 13.** *Let no man say when he is tempted*, etc.] Here the apostle uses the word “tempted”, in another sense than he did before. Before he speaks of temptations, as matter of joy and boasting, here of temptations, which are criminal, and issue in shame and death; the temptations he before makes mention of, being patiently endured, denominate men happy, but here such are designed, which are to be deprecated, and watched against; before he treats of temptations, which were the means of trying and exercising grace, and of purging away the dross of sin and corruption, but here of temptations to sin, and which are in themselves sinful; before he discourses of temptations in which God was concerned; but here of temptations which he removes from him, and denies of him, as being unworthy of him: wherefore, when any man is tempted to sin, whether when under adversity, or in prosperity, let him not say,

*I am tempted of God*; for God is holy, and without iniquity, nor does he delight in sin, but hates and abhors it; nor can he commit it, it being contrary to his nature, and the perfections of it; whereas no one can tempt another to sin, unless he is sinful himself, and delights in sin, and in those that commit it, nor without committing it himself; and yet sinful men are apt to charge God with their sins, and temptations to them, in imitation of their first parent, Adam, when fallen, (<sup><0132></sup>Genesis 3:12) who, to excuse himself, lays the blame upon the woman, and ultimately upon God, who gave her to him; and suggests, that if it had not been for the woman, he should not have ate of the forbidden fruit, nor should he have had any temptation to it, had not God given him the woman to be with him, and therefore it was his fault; and in this sad manner do his sons and daughters

reason, who, when, through affliction, they murmur against God, distrust his providence, or forsake his ways, say, if he had not laid his hand upon them, or suffered such afflictions to befall them, they had not been guilty of such sin: he himself is the occasion of them; but let no man talk at this wicked rate,

*for God cannot be tempted with evil*; or “evils”, He was tempted by the Israelites at Massah and Meribah, from which those places had their names, who by their murmuring, distrust and unbelief, proved and tried his patience and his power; and so he may be, and has been tempted by others in a like way; he may be tempted by evil men, and with evil things, but he cannot be tempted “to evil”, as the Ethiopic version renders it; he is proof against all such temptations: he cannot be tempted by anything in himself, who is pure and holy, or by any creature or thing without him, to do any sinful action:

*neither tempteth he any man*; that is, to sin; he tempted Abraham, to try his faith, love, and obedience to him; he tempted the Israelites in the wilderness, to try them and humble them, and prove what was in their hearts; and he tempted Job, and tried his faith and patience; and so he tempts and tries all his righteous ones, by afflictions, more or less: but he never tempts or solicits them to sin; temptations to sin come from another quarter, as follows.

**Ver. 14.** *But every man is tempted*, etc.] To sin, and he falls in with the temptation, and by it,

*when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed*; the metaphor is taken either from fishes, who are enticed by the bait, and drawn out by the hook; or from a lascivious woman, who meeting with a young man, entices him, and draws him away after her to commit iniquity with her: by “lust” is meant the principle of corrupt nature, which has its residence in the heart of man; is natural and hereditary to him, and therefore is called his own; he is conceived and shapen in it; he brings it into the world with him, and it continues in him, and is called his own heart's lust, (~~1024~~ Romans 1:24). Now this meeting with some bait, which entices and draws it out, or with some external object, which promises pleasure or profit, a man is allured, and ensnared, and drawn away by it, and so the temptation begins: thus, for instance, covetousness was the predominant lust in Judas; this meeting with an external object, or objects, which promised him profit, he is at once enticed and drawn away to betray his Lord and master for the sake of it: so

sin often promises pleasure, though it is but an imaginary, and a short lived one; which takes with a man's own lust, and corruption within him, and so he is allured and drawn aside; and to this, and not to God, should he attribute temptation to sin.

**Ver. 15.** *Then when lust hath conceived*, etc.] A proposal of pleasure or profit being made, agreeable to lust, or the principle of corrupt nature, sinful man is pleased with it; and instead of resisting and rejecting the motion made, he admits of it, and receives it, and cherishes it in his mind; he dallies and plays with it; he dwells upon it in his thoughts, and hides it under his tongue, and in his heart, as a sweet morsel, and forsakes it not, but contrives ways and means how to bring it about; and this is lust's conceiving. The figure is used in (<sup><1974></sup>Psalm 7:14) on which Kimchi, a Jewish commentator, has this note;

“he (the psalmist) compares the thoughts of the heart **ִּוּרְחִי** , “to a conception”, and when they go out in word, this is “travail”, and in work or act, this is “bringing forth”.”

And so it follows here,

*it bringeth forth sin*; into act, not only by consenting to it, but by performing it:

*and sin, when it is finished*: being solicited, is agreed to, and actually committed:

*bringeth forth death*; as the first sin of man brought death into the world, brought a spiritual death, or moral death upon man, subjected him to a corporeal death, and made him liable to an eternal one; so every sin is deserving of death, death is the just wages of it; yea, even the motions of sin work in men to bring forth fruit unto death. Something like these several gradual steps, in which sin proceeds, is observed by the Jews, and expressed in much the like language, in allegorizing the case of Lot, and his two daughters<sup>f9</sup> ;

“the concupiscent soul (or “lust”) stirs up the evil figment, and imagines by it, and it cleaves to every evil imagination, **trb[tmç**, “until it conceives a little”, and produces in the heart of man the evil thought, and cleaves to it; and as yet it is in his heart, and is not “finished” to do it, until this desire or lust stirs up the strength of



the body, first to cleave to the evil figment, and then **h[rh  
μwl ct**, “sin is finished”; as it is said, (<sup>-0195</sup>Genesis 19:36).”

**Ver. 16.** *Do not err, my beloved brethren.*] For to make God the author of sin, or to charge him with being concerned in temptation to sin, is a very great error, a fundamental one, which strikes at the nature and being of God, and at the perfection of his holiness: it is a denying of him, and is one of those damnable errors and heresies, which bring upon men swift destruction; and therefore to be guarded against, rejected, and abhorred by all that profess any regard unto him, his name and glory.

**Ver. 17.** *Every good gift and every perfect gift,* etc.] Whether of nature, providence, or grace, and especially the latter; spiritual gifts given along with Christ, or spiritual blessings in him; every such gift is; as the Vulgate Latin version reads, the “best” gift; better than those which only relate to the present life: and is “perfect” such as the gifts of righteousness, remission of sins, adoption, regeneration, and eternal life. The Jews say <sup>f10</sup>, that the good things of this world are not truly good, in comparison of the good things of the world to come, and are not **bwj rwmg**, “a perfect good.” And every such an one is from above; is not from a man's self, from the creature, or from below, but from heaven, and from God who dwells there:

*and cometh down from the Father of lights;* or author of lights; of all corporeal light; as the sun, moon, and stars; of all natural, rational, and moral light, in angels and men; of all spiritual light, or the light of grace in regenerate persons; and of eternal light, the light of glory in the spirits of just then made perfect:

*with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning:* as there is in that great luminary, the sun in the firmament, which has its parallaxes, eclipses, and turnings, and casts its shadow; it rises and sets, appears and disappears every day; and it comes out of one tropic, and enters into another at certain seasons of the year: but with God, who is light itself, and in him is no darkness at all, there is no change, nor anything like it; he is changeable in his nature, perfections, purposes, promises, and gifts; wherefore he being holy, cannot turn to that which is evil; nor can he, who is the fountain of light, be the cause of darkness, or admit of any in him; and since every good and perfect gift comes from him, evil cannot proceed from him, nor can he tempt any to it.

**Ver. 18.** *Of his own will begat he us*, etc.] The apostle instances in one of those good and perfect gifts, regeneration; and he pitches upon a very proper and pertinent one, since this is the first gift of grace God bestows upon his people openly, and in their own persons; and is what involves other gifts, and prepares and makes meet for the gift of eternal life; and therefore may well be reckoned a “good” one, and it is also a “perfect one”; it is done at once; there are no degrees in it, as in sanctification; a man is born again, at once, and is born a perfect new man in all his parts; no one is more regenerated than another, or the same person more regenerated at one time than at another: and this comes from above; it is called a being born from above, in (~~400B~~ John 3:3) as the words there may be rendered; and it comes from God the Father, even the Father of our Lord Jesus, as well as of all lights, (~~400B~~ 1 Peter 1:3) and who in it produces light, in darkness, and whose gifts of grace bestowed along with it are without repentance. And since this comes from him, he cannot be the author of evil, or tempt unto it. This is a settled and certain point, that all the good that is in men, and is done by them, comes from God; and all the evil that is in them, and done by them, is of themselves. This act of begetting here ascribed to God, is what is elsewhere called a begetting again, that is, regeneration; it is an implantation of new principles of light and life, grace and holiness, in men; a quickening of them, when dead in trespasses and sins; a forming of Christ in their souls; and a making them partakers of the divine nature; and this is God's act, and not man's. Earthly parents cannot beget in this sense; nor ministers of the word, not causally, but only instrumentally, as they are instruments and means, which God makes use of; neither the ministry of the word, nor the ordinance of baptism, can of themselves regenerate any; nor can a man beget himself, as not in nature, so not in grace: the nature of the thing shows it, and the impotent case of men proves it: this is God's act, and his only; (see ~~401B~~ John 1:13) and the impulsive or moving cause of it is his own will. God does not regenerate, or beget men by necessity of nature, but of his own free choice; Christ, the Son of God, is begotten of him by necessity of nature, and not as the effect of his will; he is the brightness of his glory necessarily, as the beams and rays of light are necessarily emitted by the sun; but so it is not in regeneration: nor does God regenerate men through any consideration of their will, works, and merits: nor have these any influence at all upon it; but he begets of his own free grace and favour, and of his rich and abundant mercy, and of his sovereign will and pleasure, according to his counsels

and purposes of old. And the means he makes use of, or with which he does it, is

*with the word of truth*; not Christ, who is the Word, and truth itself; though regeneration is sometimes ascribed to him; and this act of begetting is done by the Father, through the resurrection of Christ from the dead; but the Gospel, which is the word of truth, and truth itself, and contains nothing but truth; and by this souls are begotten and born again; (see <sup>4013</sup>Ephesians 1:13 <sup>4023</sup>1 Peter 1:23) and hence ministers of it are accounted spiritual fathers. Faith, and every other grace in regeneration, and even the Spirit himself, the Regenerator, come this way: and the end is,

*that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures*; either of his new creatures, and so it has respect to such, as James, and others; who received the firstfruits of the Spirit, who first hoped and trusted in Christ, and were openly in him, and converted to him before others; or of his creatures, of mankind in general, who, with the Jews, are usually called creatures; (see Gill on <sup>4165</sup>Mark 16:15”), and designs those who are redeemed from among men, and are the firstfruits to God, and to the Lamb, as their regeneration makes appear: and this shows that such as are begotten again, or regenerated, are separated and distinguished from others, as the firstfruits be; and that they are preferred unto, and are more excellent than the rest of mankind, being made so by the grace of God; and that they are by regenerating grace devoted to the service of God, and are formed for his praise and glory.

**Ver. 19.** *Wherefore, my beloved brethren*, etc.] Since the Gospel, the word of truth, is the means and instrument which God makes use of in regeneration, and in forming people for himself:

*let every man be swift to hear*; not anything; not idle and unprofitable talk, or filthy and corrupt communication; but wholesome advice, good instructions, and the gracious experiences of the saints, and, above all, the word of God; to the hearing of which men should fly, as doves to their windows; should make haste, and be early in their attendance on it, as well, as constant; and receive it with all readiness, and with a sort of greediness of mind, that their souls may be profited, and God may be glorified: the phrase is Jewish; things easy and smooth, a man is <sup>^</sup>[*mçl ryhm*, “swift to hear them”<sup>f11</sup>: slow to speak”]; against what is heard, without thoroughly weighing and considering what is said; and this may regard silence under

hearing the word, and is also a rule to be observed in private conversation: or the sense may be, be content to be hearers of the word, and not forward to be preachers of it; and if called to that work, think before you speak, meditate on the word, and study to be approved to God and men. Silence is not only highly commended by the Pythagoreans, among whom it was enjoined their disciples five years<sup>f12</sup>; but also by the Jews: they say, nothing is better for the body than silence; that if a word is worth one shekel, silence is worth two, or worth a precious stone; that it is the spice of speech, and the chief of all spices; that it is the hedge of wisdom; hence it is the advice of Shammai, “say little, and do much”<sup>f13</sup>: and they cry up, as a very excellent precept, “be silent, and hear”; and as containing more than persons are aware of<sup>f14</sup>:

*slow to wrath*; in hearing; when admonitions and reproofs are given, sin is exposed, and vice corrected, and the distinguishing doctrines of grace, are preached; which are apt to fill natural men with wrath, and which must greatly hinder the usefulness of the word; (see ~~408~~ Luke 4:28). This is omitted in the Ethiopic version.

**Ver. 20.** *For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*] This is so far from engaging persons to do that which is right and acceptable in the sight of God, that it puts them upon doing that which is evil. The Alexandrian copy reads, “with the wrath of men do not work the righteousness of God”; do not attend upon the word and ordinances of God with a wrathful spirit. Compare, with this, (~~548~~ 1 Timothy 2:8).

**Ver. 21.** *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness*, etc.] All manner of filthiness, both of flesh and spirit; all pride, vanity, wrath, malice, and evil speaking, under hearing the word: the allusion seems to be to a boiling pot, which casts up scum and filth, which must be taken off: and such is the spirit of wrathful men; it throws up the filth of haughtiness and pride, of anger, wrath, and wickedness, which must be taken off, and laid aside; or the word will not be heard to any profit, or advantage:

*and superfluity of naughtiness*, or “malice”; the abundance and overflow of it, which arises from such an evil heart, where wrath prevails, and governs: (see ~~411~~ 1 Peter 2:1). There seems to be an allusion to the removing of the superfluous foreskin of the flesh, in circumcision, typical

*of the foreskin of the heart*, spoken of in (<sup><2000></sup>Jeremiah 4:4) which the Targum, in that place, calls <sup>ˆ</sup>wkbl [çr, “the wickedness”, or “naughtiness of your hearts” to be removed:

*and receive with meekness the ingrafted word*; which becomes so when it is received; when it is put into the heart by the Spirit of God, and is mixed with faith by them that hear it; so that it is, as it were, incorporated into them, and becomes natural to them, which before was not; and taking deep root in them, brings forth much fruit: and where it comes with power, it reduces every high thought into the obedience of Christ, and makes men meek and humble; and only such receive the truth in the love of it; and to such is the Gospel preached, (<sup><2300></sup>Isaiah 61:1), and none but such hear it with profit and edification:

*which is able to save your souls*; even your whole persons, both soul and body: but the soul is only mentioned, as being the more excellent part of man: this must not be understood of the word, as if it was the author or cause of salvation, but as an instrument; it being a declaration of salvation by Christ, or what shows unto men the way of salvation by him; and is the power of God unto salvation to them, when it is attended with the energy of the Spirit, and the efficacy of divine grace. (see <sup><800></sup>2 Timothy 3:15).

**Ver. 22.** *But be ye doers of the word*, etc.] And they are such, who spiritually understand it; gladly receive it; and from the heart obey it, and make a sincere and ingenuous profession of it; and who submit to the ordinances it directs to, and keep them as they have been delivered; and live, and walk, becoming their profession of it. The Arabic and Ethiopic versions read, “be ye doers of the law”; and so one of Stephens's copies, as in (<sup><800></sup>Romans 2:13)

*and not hearers only*; though the word should be heard swiftly and readily, and received with meekness; yet it should not be barely heard, and assented to; but what is heard should be put in practice; and especially men should not depend upon their hearing, as if that would save them; this is deceiving your own selves; such as rest upon the outward hearing of the word will be sadly deceived, and will find themselves miserably mistaken, another day; (see <sup><0100></sup>Luke 13:25,26). Arguments taken from hence are like the sophisms, paralogsms, and false reasonings of sophisters, which carry a fair show, and ensnare and deceive.

**Ver. 23.** *But if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer*, etc.] The Arabic version here again reads, “a hearer of the law”, and so some copies; not hearing, but practice, is the main thing; not theory, but action: hence, says R. Simeon, not the word, or the searching into it, and the explanation of it, is the root, or principal thing, **hç[mh al a**, “but the work”<sup>f15</sup>: and if a man is only a preacher, or a hearer, and not a doer,

*he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass*; or, “the face of his generation”; the face with which he was born; his true, genuine, native face; in distinction from any counterfeit one, or from the face of his mind: it means his own corporeal face. The Ethiopic version renders it, “the lineaments of his face”.

**Ver. 24.** *For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way*, etc.] He takes a slight glance of himself, and departs:

*and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was*; he forgets either his spots, blemishes, and imperfections; or his comeliness and beauty; the features of his face, be they comely or not: so a bare hearer of the word, who is not concerned to practise what he hears, while he is hearing, he observes some things amiss in himself, and some excellencies in Christ; but, when the discourse is over, he goes his way, and thinks no more of either.

**Ver. 25.** *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty*, etc.] By which is meant, not the moral law, but the Gospel; for only of that is the apostle speaking in the context: this is no other than the word of truth, with which God begets men of his own will; and is the ingrafted word which is able to save, and of which men should be doers, as well as hearers, (<sup><5018></sup>James 1:18,21,22), and this is compared to a glass by the Apostle Paul, (<sup><4018></sup>2 Corinthians 3:18), and the word here used for looking into it is the same word the Apostle Peter uses of the angels, who desired to look into the mysteries of the Gospel, (<sup><6012></sup>1 Peter 1:12) all which serve to strengthen this sense; now the Gospel is called a law; not that it is a law, strictly speaking, consisting precepts, and established and enforced by sanctions penalties; for it is a declaration of righteousness and salvation by Christ; a publication of peace and pardon by him; and a free promise of eternal life, through him; but as it is an instruction, or doctrine: the law with the Jews is called **hrwt**, because it is teaching and instructive; and everything that is so is by them called by this name: hence we find the doctrine of the Messiah, which is no other than the Gospel, is in the Old Testament called

the law of the Lord, and his law, (<sup><210D></sup>Isaiah 2:2 42:4) and in the New Testament it is called the law, or doctrine of faith, (<sup><81KZ></sup>Romans 3:27) and this doctrine is perfect, as in (<sup><49UE></sup>Psalms 19:7), it being a perfect plan of truths, containing in it all truth, as it is in Jesus, even all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and because it is a revelation of things perfect; of the perfect righteousness of Christ, and of perfect justification by it, and of free and full pardon of sins through him, and of complete salvation by him; and because it directs to Christ, in whom perfection is: and it is a law or doctrine of liberty; **τον της ελευθεριας**, “that which is if liberty”; which has liberty for its subject, which treats of it, even of the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free: the Gospel proclaims this liberty to captive souls; and is the word of truth, which makes them free, or is the means of freeing them from the slavery of sin, from the captivity of Satan, and from the bondage of the law; and is what gives souls freedom and boldness at the throne of grace; and is that which leads them into the liberty of grace here, and gives them a view and hope of the glorious liberty of the children of God hereafter. This doctrine is as a glass to look into; in which is beheld the glory of Christ's person and office, and grace; and though by the law is the knowledge of sin, yet a man never so fully and clearly discovers the sin that dwells in him, and the swarms of corruption which are in his heart, as when the light of the glorious Gospel shines into him, and when in it he beholds the beauty and glory of Jesus Christ; (see <sup><216B></sup>Isaiah 6:5) and looking into this glass, or into this doctrine, is by faith, and with the eyes of the understanding, opened and enlightened by the Spirit of God; and the word here used signifies a looking wistly and intently, with great care and thought, and not in a slight and superficial manner; and such a looking is designed, as is attended with effect; such an one as transforms into the same image that is beheld, from glory to glory; and happy is the man that so looks into it.

*And continueth therein*; is not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, nor carried about with divers and strange doctrines; but is established in the faith, stands fast in it, and abides by it; or continues looking into this glass, and to Christ, the author and finisher of faith, who is beheld in it; and keeps his eye upon it, and the object held forth in it; and constantly attends the ministration of it:

*he being not a forgetful hearer*; but takes heed to the things he hears and sees, lest he should let them slip; and being conscious of the weakness of



his memory, implores the divine Spirit to be his remembrancer, and bring to his mind, with fresh power and light, what he has heard:

*but a doer of the work*; of the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, and of every work and ordinance the Gospel ministry points unto; doing and being subject to all in faith, from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory of God and Christ.

*This man shall be blessed in his deed*; or “doing”, and while he is doing; not that he is blessed for what he does, but “in” what he does; (see <sup><1991></sup>Psalm 19:11) he having, in hearing the word, and looking into it, and in submitting to every ordinance of the Gospel, the presence of God, the discoveries of his love, communion with Christ, and communication of grace from him by the Spirit; so that Wisdom's ways become ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace; (see <sup><1950></sup>Psalm 65:4 84:4,5), moreover, in all such a man does, he is prosperous and successful; in all he does he prospers: and so he is blessed in his deed, by God, whose blessing makes rich, both in spirituals and temporals: there seems to be an allusion to the blessed man in (<sup><1900></sup>Psalm 1:1,3).

**Ver. 26.** *If any man among you seem to be religious*, etc.] By his preaching, or praying, and hearing, and other external duties of religion, he is constant in the observance of; and who, upon the account of these things, “thinks himself to be a religious man”, as the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions render it; or is thought to be so by others:

*and bridleth not his tongue*; but boasts of his works, and speaks ill of his brethren; backbites them, and hurts their names and characters, by private insinuations, and public charges without any foundation; who takes no care of what he says, but gives his tongue a liberty of speaking anything, to the injury of others, and the dishonour of God, and his ways: there seems to be an allusion to (<sup><1901></sup>Psalm 39:1).

*But deceiveth his own heart*; with his show of religion, and external performances; on which he builds his hopes of salvation; of which he is confident; and so gives himself to a loose way of talking what he pleases:

*this man's religion is vain*; useless, and unprofitable to himself and others; all his preaching, praying, hearing, and attendance on the ordinances will be of no avail to him; and he, notwithstanding these, by his evil tongue, brings a scandal and reproach upon the ways of God, and doctrines of Christ.



**Ver. 27.** *Pure religion and undefiled*, etc.] That which is sincere and genuine, and free from adulteration and hypocrisy:

*before God and the Father*; or in the sight of God the Father of Christ, and all his people; that which is approved of by him, who is the searcher of hearts, and the trier of the reins of men, “is this”: not that the apostle is giving a full definition of true religion; only he mentions some of the effects of it, by which it is known, and without which it cannot be true and genuine; and they are these:

*to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*; and not only to see them, and speak a word of comfort to them, but to communicate to them, and supply their wants, as they may require, and according to the ability God has given: where there is true religion in the heart, there is love to God; and where there is love to God, there is love to the saints; and this will show itself to them, in times of affliction and distress; and where this is wanting, religion itself is not pure and undefiled:

*and to keep himself unspotted from the world*: from the men of the world, who defile by their evil communications; and “from the vices of the world”, as the Arabic version renders it, which are of a defiling nature; and, where religion is in its power and purity, and the Gospel of the grace of God comes with efficacy, it teaches to separate from the rest of the world, and to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly.

# CHAPTER 2

## INTRODUCTION TO JAMES 2

In this chapter the apostle dissuades from a respect of persons, on account of outward circumstances; shows that the law is to be fulfilled, and that mercy is to be exercised, as well as justice done; and exposes the folly of such who boast of faith without works: he dissuades the saints from all partiality to the rich and poor, from their relation to one another, as brethren, and from their common faith, of which Christ, the Lord of glory, is the object, (<sup><S001></sup>James 2:1) supposes an instance of it, either in a court of judicature, or a religious assembly, (<sup><S002></sup>James 2:2,3) and then makes an appeal unto them, and expostulates with them about it, (<sup><S003></sup>James 2:4) and makes use of an argument against it, taken from the divine conduct, and an instance of his grace in the choice of persons to eternal life, (<sup><S004></sup>James 2:5) a conduct very different from some persons here blamed, (<sup><S005></sup>James 2:6), and other arguments follow, dissuading from a respect of persons, taken from the characters of rich men, as oppressors of the poor, litigious and quarrelsome with their neighbours, and blasphemers of the name of God, (<sup><S006></sup>James 2:7) and from the law of God, which requires the love of the neighbour, and which to fulfil is to do well, (<sup><S007></sup>James 2:8) and from the breach of it, by having respect to persons, whereby its penalty is incurred, (<sup><S008></sup>James 2:9) for which a reason is given; because whoever offends in one point of the law, is guilty of the whole, (<sup><S009></sup>James 2:10) as is a clear case, since the same lawgiver that forbids one sin, forbids another; so that he that is guilty of either of them is a transgressor of the law, (<sup><S010></sup>James 2:11) wherefore it is right both to speak and act according to it, since men will be judged by it, (<sup><S011></sup>James 2:12) and he will have no mercy shown him that has shown none to the poor, but merciful ones will escape damnation, (<sup><S012></sup>James 2:13) and then the apostle argues from the unprofitableness of faith itself without works, (<sup><S013></sup>James 2:14) and which he exemplifies in the case of a poor brother or sister who are wished well, but nothing given them; which good words, without deeds, are of no profit, (<sup><S014></sup>James 2:15,16) so in like manner, faith without works is a dead faith, (<sup><S015></sup>James 2:17) nor indeed can it be made out that a man has faith, if he has not works, (<sup><S016></sup>James 2:18) at least such a faith as has justification and

salvation connected with it; his faith, at most, is no better than that of the devils, who are damned, (<sup>3126</sup>James 2:19) and that such a faith is a dead faith, (<sup>3122</sup>James 2:2) and that true faith is attended with, and evidenced by works, the apostle proves by two instances; the one is that of Abraham, whose faith appeared to be genuine, and he to be a justified person, by the works he did; particularly by offering up his son Isaac; in which way his faith operated, and showed itself to be sincere and hearty; and the Scripture was fulfilled that Abraham was a believer; and had righteousness imputed to him, and was a friend of God, and a justified person, (<sup>3121</sup>James 2:21-24) and the other instance is that of Rahab, whose faith was also shown by her works, and so a justified person, by receiving the spies with peace, and dismissing them with safety, (<sup>3125</sup>James 2:25), and then the apostle explains what he means, by saying more than once, that faith without works is dead; which he illustrates by the simile of a man's body being dead, without the spirit or soul in it, (<sup>3126</sup>James 2:26).

**Ver. 1.** *My brethren*, etc.] As the apostle is about to dissuade from the evil of having respect to persons, this is a very fit introduction to it, and carries in it an argument why it should not obtain; since the saints are all brethren, they are children of the same Father, belong to the same family, and are all one in Christ Jesus, whether high or low, rich, or poor:

*have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, [the] Lord of glory, with respect of persons:* that is, such as have, and hold, and profess the faith of Christ, ought not along with it to use respect of persons, or to make such a distinction among the saints, as to prefer the rich, to the contempt of the poor; and in this exhortation many things are contained, which are so many arguments why such a practice should not be encouraged; for faith, whether as a doctrine or as a grace, is alike precious, and common to all; and is the faith of Christ, which, as a doctrine, is delivered by him to all the saints, and as a grace, he is both the author and object of it; and is the faith of their common Lord and Saviour, and who is the Lord of glory, or the glorious Lord; and the poor as well as the rich are espoused by him, as their Lord and husband; and are redeemed by him, and are equally under his government and protection, and members of his body: the Syriac Version reads, “have not the faith of the glory of our Lord Jesus”, etc. meaning either the glory which Christ is possessed of, whether as the Son of God, in the perfections of his nature, or as man and Mediator, being now crowned with glory and honour, and which is seen and known by faith; or else that glory which Christ has in his hands, to bestow upon his

people, and to which they are called, and will appear in, when he shall appear, and about which their faith is now employed: and since this glory equally belongs to them all, no difference should be made on account of outward circumstances, so as to treat any believer with neglect and contempt.

**Ver. 2.** *For if there come unto your assembly*, etc.] The place of religious worship where saints are assembled together for that purpose; though some think a civil court of judicature is intended, and to which the context seems to incline; (see <sup>316</sup>James 2:6)

*a man with a gold ring*; on his finger, which shows him to be a man of dignity and wealth; so those of the senatorian and equestrian orders among the Romans were distinguished from the common people by wearing gold rings; though in time the use of them became promiscuous <sup>f16</sup>; the ancients used to wear but one <sup>f17</sup>, as here but one is mentioned; and only freemen, not servants, might wear it: however, by this circumstance, the apostle describes a rich man, adding,

*in goodly apparel*; gay clothing, bright shining garments, glistening with gold and silver, very rich and costly, as well as whole, neat, and clean:

*and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment*; mean and despicable, filthy and ragged: in the courts of judicature with the Jews, two men, who were at law with one another, might not have different apparel on while they were in court, and their cause was trying: their law runs thus <sup>f18</sup>;

“two adversaries (at law with each other), if one of them is clothed “with precious garments”, (μυργυ μυδγβ, “goodly apparel”,) and the other is clothed with ^yywzb μυδγβ, “vile raiment”, (the judge) says to the honourable person, either clothe him as thou art, while thou contendest with him, or be clothed as he is, that ye may be alike, or on an equal foot.”

**Ver. 3.** *And ye have respect to him that wears the gay clothing*, etc.] Take notice of him, and show favour to him, to the neglect and contempt of the other. This is an instance of respect of persons condemned and dissuaded from:

*and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place*; the best place; whether it be in a religious assembly, or in a civil court of judicature:

*and say to the poor, stand thou there;* or in a lower and meaner place:

*or sit thou here under my footstool;* this also was contrary to the Jewish canons<sup>f19</sup>, that one should sit, and another stand, while their cause was trying; the law runs thus:

“one shall not sit, and another stand, but both shall stand; but if the sanhedrim, or court, please to let them sit, they sit; but one does not sit above, and the other below; but one by the side of the other.”

**Ver. 4.** *Are ye not then partial in yourselves,* etc.] That is, guilty of such partiality as must appear to yourselves, and your own consciences must accuse you of; or do not ye distinguish, or make a difference among yourselves, by such a conduct, towards the rich and the poor:

*and are become judges of evil thoughts;* or “are distinguishers by evil thoughts”; that is, make a distinction between the rich and the poor, by an evil way of thinking, that one is better than the other, and to be preferred before him.

**Ver. 5.** *Hearken, my beloved brethren,* etc.] As to a matter of importance, and worthy of attention and regard; being an instance of the divine conduct towards the poor, and carries in it a strong argument against respect of persons:

*hath not God chosen the poor of this world?* this interrogative is equal to a strong affirmative; and the sense is, that God has chosen the poor of this world; and which is to be understood, not of the choice of them to an office, either in church or state; though sometimes this has been the case, as the instances of David, and the apostles of Christ, show; nor merely to the Gospel, and the outward means of grace, though the poor have the Gospel preached unto them; nor of the effectual calling, though this is true; but of eternal election, which is the act of God the Father, and passed before the foundation of the world; and is an act of sovereign grace, and is irrespective of faith, holiness, and good works; and is the source of all grace, and remains immutable and irrevocable: now the objects of this are, “the poor of this world”; that is, who are poor with respect to the things of this world, but not with respect to the things of another world; for they are chosen to be heirs of a kingdom, and shall enjoy it; though these are not all chosen by God, nor are they the only persons that are chosen; there are some poor men that are not chosen, and are miserable here and hereafter;

and there are some rich men that are chosen; but for the most part, or generally speaking, they are not many mighty, nor noble, but the poorer sort, which God has made choice of to partake both of grace and glory. It may be the apostle has some peculiar respect to the poor among the Gentiles, whom God had chosen; it was usual with the Jews to call the Gentiles the world, and they were Jews the apostle now writes to, and who were scattered abroad among the Gentiles; and therefore he might very aptly call them “this world”, among whom they lived; and suggest to them, that God had chosen some of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews, and even some of the poorer sort of them; and it was usual with the Jews to distinguish between **l arçy yyn** [ , “the poor of Israel”, and **μl w[ yyn** [ , “the poor of the world”, or **μl w[h twmwa yyn** [ “the poor of the nations of the world”<sup>f20</sup>: the Alexandrian copy, and some others, leave out the word “this”, and so the Syriac and Arabic versions, which makes the phrase more agreeable to the Jewish way of speaking. The Gentiles, in common, were despicable with the Jews, and especially the poor of them; and yet God chose these:

*rich in faith*; not that they were so, or were considered as such, when chosen, and so were chosen because of their faith; for then also they were, or were considered as heirs of the kingdom, which would be monstrously absurd; and yet there is as much reason, from the text, for the one, as for the other; but the sense is, that they were chosen “to be rich in faith”; and so the Syriac version supplies in the next clause, “that they might be heirs”; which if it had been placed before this clause also, would have been right; election to grace is signified in the one, and election to glory in the other: men are chosen, not because they do believe, or shall believe, but that they might believe; and which faith they have in consequence of election; and which when they have, they are rich: faith is a rich precious grace itself; it is a part of the riches of grace, and is more worth than thousands of gold and silver; and it is the means of receiving and enjoying much riches, as Christ the pearl of great price himself, and all spiritual blessings along with him; such as the rich robe of his righteousness, full pardon of sin, which is according to the riches of his grace, and adoption, which makes men heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, and even the eternal inheritance itself, both the promise of it, and a right unto it; all which are said to be received by faith; and therefore believers, how poor soever they may be, to this world's goods, are truly rich men:

*and heirs of the kingdom*; of glory, which is prepared for all the chosen ones, from the foundation of the world; and is freely given to them by their Father, and to which they are called in the effectual calling; and hence they are made kings and priests unto God, and have crowns and thrones provided for them: the Alexandrian copy reads, “heirs of the promise which he hath promised to them that love him”; that is, which God has promised them, as the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions read; not that their love to God is the cause of this kingdom, or of their choice to it, or of the promise of it to them; all which flow from the love of God to them; but this is descriptive of the persons who shall enjoy it, and may expect to enjoy it, as in (<sup><small>3012</small></sup>James 1:12).

**Ver. 6.** *But ye have despised the poor*, etc.] Or dishonoured, and reproached them, by showing respect of persons, in preferring the rich to them, and in distinguishing them in such a manner as was to their contempt and injury; which is a reproaching not only of them, but their Maker; and is in effect saying, that God has done either a weak or a wrong thing, in choosing them to be rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom, it being directly contrary to his conduct:

*do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?* which may be understood either of rich men that were unbelievers; and these either the Heathen magistrates, who ruled over them in a tyrannical way, and with rigour, and often summoned them before them, and persecuted them with violence; or their own countrymen, the Jews, who stirred up the chief men of the Gentiles against them, and drew them to their judgment seats, as they drew Paul to the judgment seat of Gallio, (<sup><small>4430</small></sup>Acts 13:50 18:12) or else of rich professors of religion, who assumed a despotic power over the poor brethren of the church, and loved to have the pre-eminence over them, as Diotrefes did, and set up tribunals in the churches, and tried and condemned them in an arbitrary way; or else upon civil accounts had them before heathen magistrates, and went to law with them in their courts, before unbelievers, which is a practice condemned in (<sup><small>4400</small></sup>1 Corinthians 6:1), and seeing now rich men used them so ill, the apostle mentions this as an argument to dissuade them from respect of persons; seeing they had but little reason to show so much regard unto them, who had treated them in so evil a manner: this is not to be understood of all rich men; nor is the apostle's design to destroy that natural and civil order there is among men, by reason of their different stations, offices, and circumstances; it being highly proper that honour

should he given to whom honour is due, but not to the dishonour of another.

**Ver. 7.** *Do they not blaspheme that worthy name*, etc.] Of Christ, or Christians;

*by the which ye are called?* and which, as before, may design either unbelieving rich men, whether among Jews, or Gentiles, who blasphemed and cursed the name of Christ, and compelled others to do so likewise; or such who professed the Christian religion, who by their supercilious and disdainful treatment of their poor brethren, and by their dragging of them to the tribunals of the Heathens, and distressing them with vexatious law suits there, caused the name of Christ, after which they were called Christians, to be blasphemed and evil spoken of, among the Gentiles.

**Ver. 8.** *If ye fulfil the royal law*, etc.] Which is the law of love to men, without distinction of rich and poor, high and low, bond and free; and is so called, because it is the law of the King of kings; hence the Syriac version renders it, “the law of God”, it is the law of Christ, who is King of saints; and because it is a principal law, the chief of laws; as love to God is the sum of the first and great commandment in the law, and may be called the king of laws; so love to the neighbour is the second and next unto it, and may very well bear the name of the queen of laws, and so has royalty in it; and indeed this last is said to be the fulfilling of the law, (<sup>453B</sup>Romans 13:8-10 <sup>454</sup>Galatians 5:14) and it is also submitted to, and obeyed by such who are made kings and priests to God; and that in a royal manner, with a princely spirit, willingly, and with all readiness: the same word, in the Hebrew language, *pybydn*, signifies “princes”, and to be willing. The Jews frequently ascribe royalty to the law, and often speak of *hrwt rtk*, “the crown of the law”<sup>f21</sup>; and they suppose the Israelites had crowns upon their heads, when the law was given them on Mount Sinai, in which were engraven the name of God, and which they were stripped of when they made the golden calf<sup>f22</sup>: now this royal law is fulfilled, when it is regarded without respect of persons,

*according to the Scripture*, in (<sup>490B</sup>Leviticus 19:18)

*thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself*; and which is to be understood of every nation, without distinction of Jews and Gentiles, and of persons of every state and condition, rich and poor, without any difference: and when this law is so observed, it is commendable:



*ye do well*: that which is right, and which is a man's duty to do; this, when done from right principles, and to a right end, is a good work, and is doing a good work well.

**Ver. 9.** *But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin*, &c] This is not doing well, but is a transgression of the law, as every sin is; hence it follows,

*and are convinced of the law as transgressors*; which carries on a formal process against such persons; it accuses them of sin, and charges them with it; it proves it upon them, and convicts them of it; it pronounces them guilty, and curses them for it; and passes the sentence of condemnation and death upon them; wherefore care should be taken not to commit this sin, and so fall under the convictions and reproofs of the law.

**Ver. 10.** *For whosoever shall keep the whole law*, etc.] Or the greatest part of it, excepting only in one point, as follows: Adam, in a state of innocence, was able to keep the whole law, but by sin he lost that power, nor can any of his posterity now keep it perfectly: they are all transgressors of it, and liable to its penalty; unregenerate men are not obedient to it, and have an aversion to it, and despise it, and cast it behind their backs; regenerate persons, who love it, and delight in it, after the inner man, do not keep it perfectly; the several parts of the law may be indeed kept by a believer, and that sincerely, but not to a perfect degree, for in many things they all offend; Christ only has perfectly kept it, and is the fulfilling end of it for righteousness; men of a pharisaical disposition may fancy they have kept it wholly, as the young man in the Gospel, and Saul, before his conversion; but this is but a fancy, and a sad mistake: the case in the text is only a supposed one, and, as it is here put, implies perfection; for it follows,

*and yet offend in one point*; sin, which is a transgression of the law, is an offense to God the Father, who is of purer eyes than to behold it; to Jesus Christ, who loves righteousness, and hates iniquity; and to the blessed Spirit who is grieved and vexed by it; and to the justice of God, which being injured by it, demands satisfaction; and to the law of God, which accuses, convinces, reproveth, and condemns for it. The word used signifies to "fall", and designs more than stumbling, even an open breach and violation of the law; and which being made, by any, in a single instance,

*he is guilty of all*: this seems to agree with some common sayings of the Jews, that he that is suspected in one thing, is suspected in the whole law <sup>f23</sup>; and he that keeps this or the other command, keeps the whole law; and he that breaks this, or the other command, breaks the whole law; as whether it respects the sabbath, or adultery, or that command. Thou shall not covet, or any other <sup>f24</sup>: and this must be understood, not of every particular command in the law, as if he that is guilty of murder is in that instance also guilty of adultery; or he that is guilty of adultery is in that instance guilty of murder; but the sense is, that he is guilty of the breach of the whole law, though not of the whole of the law; as he that breaks anyone condition of a covenant, which may consist of many, though he does not violate every condition, yet breaks the whole covenant; so he that transgresses in anyone point of the law, breaks the whole, commits sin, and is deserving of death, and is treated by the law as a transgressor of it, let it be in what instance it will. But it does not follow from hence, that all sins are equal, as the Stoics say <sup>f25</sup>, for there are greater and lesser sins, (~~491~~ John 19:11) though not some venial, and others mortal, for the wages of every sin is death; nor that the punishment of sin will be alike, as all sins were punishable alike by Draco's laws, but not by the law of God, (~~412~~ Matthew 11:22,24) but this may be fairly concluded from hence, that there can be no justification in the sight of God, by an imperfect obedience to, the law, or by a partial righteousness: the law requires perfect obedience, and in failure of that, though but in one point, curses and condemns; and likewise it may be inferred from hence, that a man is not at liberty to obey and neglect what commandments of the law he pleases, but should have respect to them all; which seems greatly the design of the apostle, as appears by what follows.

**Ver. 11.** *For he that said, Do not commit adultery*, etc.] That same lawgiver, who is but one, and is God, that gave out the seventh command, and forbids adultery,

*said also, Do not kill*; delivered the sixth command, which forbids murder.

*Now if thou commit no adultery*; do not break the seventh command;

*yet if thou kill*, break the sixth command,

*thou art become a transgressor of the law*; not of that particular precept of the law, the seventh command, for the contrary is supposed before, but of the sixth only; and yet by so doing, a man becomes a violator of the whole

law; for the law is but one, though it consists of various precepts; and the breach of one precept, as well as of another, is the breach of the law: and besides, there is but one lawgiver, who has enjoined one command, as well as another, and whose legislative power and authority is despised and trampled upon by the violation of one command, as of another. This is the apostle's argument, and way of reasoning, proving the above assertion, that he that breaks the law in one particular instance, is guilty of the breach of the whole law.

**Ver. 12.** *So speak ye, and so do*, etc.] Both words and actions should be taken care of; it becomes men to observe what they say, and what they do; for both sinful words and works are transgressions of the law, and will be brought to judgment; every idle word, as well as every evil work, both open and secret, men must give an account of in the day of judgment: wherefore it is incumbent on them so to behave,

*as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty*: (See Gill on “<sup>3025</sup>James 1:25”) with which compare ( <sup>3012</sup>Romans 2:12,16). Heathens will be judged by the law of nature, Jews by the law of Moses, and those who live under the Gospel dispensation, according to the Gospel of Christ.

**Ver. 13.** *For he shall have judgment without mercy*, etc.] Strict justice, and no mercy shown him:

*that hath showed no mercy*; to the poor brethren, and distressed members of Christ, but has shown respect of persons to the hurt of the poor, and has despised and oppressed them, instead of relieving and comforting them; so the rich man, that neglected Lazarus at his gates, is refused a drop of water to cool his tongue; and the servant that cruelly insisted on his fellow servant's paying him all he owed, justly incurred the displeasure of his Lord, and was by him delivered to the tormentors; and that servant that beats his fellow servants will be cut asunder, and, have his portion with hypocrites; and such who have seen any of the brethren of Christ hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and in prison, and have showed no regard for them, will hear, “Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire”:

*and mercy rejoiceth against judgment*; that is merciful men, who have shown mercy to the poor saints, will not be afraid of the awful judgment, but rather rejoice or glory, as the word signifies, in the view of it, since they will obtain mercy at that day, and hear, Come, ye blessed of my Father, etc. ( <sup>1034</sup>Matthew 25:34-36) so the Ethiopic version renders it, he

only shall glory in the day of judgment, who hath showed mercy; the Alexandrian copy reads in the imperative, “let mercy glory”, etc. and the Syriac version, “be ye exalted by mercy over judgment”.

**Ver. 14.** *What doth it profit, my brethren*, etc.] The apostle having finished his discourse on respect of persons, and the arguments he used to dissuade from it, by an easy transition passes to treat upon faith and works, showing that faith without works, particularly without works of mercy, is of no profit and advantage:

*though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?* it is clear that the apostle is not speaking of true faith, for that, in persons capable of performing them, is not without works; it is an operative grace; it works by love and kindness, both to Christ, and to his members; but of a profession of faith, a mere historical one, by which a man, at most, assents to the truth of things, as even devils do, (~~312B~~ James 2:19) and only says he has faith, but has it not; as Simon Magus, who said he believed, but did not.

*Can faith save him?* such a faith as this, a faith without works, an historical one, a mere profession of faith, which lies only in words, and has no deeds, to show the truth and genuineness of it. True faith indeed has no causal influence on salvation, or has any virtue and efficacy in itself to save; Christ, object of faith, is the only cause and author of salvation; faith is only that grace which receives a justifying righteousness, the pardon of sin, adoption, and a right to the heavenly inheritance; but it does not justify, nor pardon, nor adopt, nor give the right to the inheritance, but lays hold on, and claims these, by virtue of the gift of grace; and it has spiritual and eternal salvation inseparably connected with it; but as for the other faith, a man may have it, and be in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity; he may have all faith in that sense, and be nothing; it is no other than the devils themselves have; and so he may have it, and be damned.

**Ver. 15.** *If a brother or sister*, etc.] A Christian man or woman, a fellow member of a church of Christ; for this relation is to be understood in a spiritual sense, though it does not exclude such who are in this relation in a natural sense:

*be naked*; or clothed in rags, or in very mean and sordid apparel, such as will neither keep them warm, nor clean and decent; for they must not be supposed to be entirely naked, but to be in a very uncomfortable and indecent garb:

*and destitute of daily food*; have not food sufficient for the day; or aught to support nature with, and yield them proper refreshment and nourishment.

**Ver. 16.** *And one of you say unto them*, etc.] That is, one of the same faith, and in the same communion and church fellowship.

*Depart in peace*; wishing them all prosperity and happiness, inward and outward:

*be ye warmed and filled*; clothed and fed; signifying, that they wished them all the accommodations of life:

*notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body*; neither clothes to wear, nor food to eat; nothing to warm their bodies, or fill their bellies:

*what doth it profit?* the Ethiopic version reads, “what doth it profit them?” either the poor brother, or sister, to whom these good words are given, and nothing else; for these will neither warm them, nor fill them; or the persons themselves, that say these tidings to them: and the apostle, by this instance, shows, that as that charity which lies only in words, and in tongue, and not in deed, and in truth, is unprofitable, and good for nothing, even to them that profess it; so that faith, which a man says he has, and yet is without works, is alike unprofitable unto him.

**Ver. 17.** *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*] It is like a lifeless carcass, a body without a soul, (<sup>sm26</sup>James 2:26) for as works, without faith, are dead works, so faith, without works, is a dead faith, and not like the lively hope and faith of regenerated persons: and indeed, such who have no other faith than this are dead in trespasses and sins; not that works are the life of faith, or that the life of faith lies in, and flows from works; but, as Dr. Ames observes <sup>f26</sup>, good works are second acts, necessarily flowing from the life of faith; to which may be added, and by these faith appears to be living, lively and active, or such who perform them appear to be true and living believers.

**Ver. 18.** *Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works*, etc.] That is, a true believer in Christ may very justly call upon a vain boaster of his faith, who has no works, to give proof and evidence of it, and address him after this manner; you say you have faith, be it so that you have; I have works, you see I have, I say nothing about my faith at present; now,

*shew me thy faith without thy works*, if thou canst; see what ways, means, and methods thou canst make use of, to make it appear to me, or any other, that you have the faith you talk of: the words are a sort of sarcasm and jeer upon the man, and yet very just, calling upon him to do that which is impossible to be done, and thereby exposing his vain boast; for faith is an inward principle in the heart; an hidden thing, and cannot be seen and known but by external acts; and where it is right, it is operative, and shows itself by works, which is not practicable in those who have none:

*and I will show thee my faith by my works*; there may be indeed an appearance of good works, where there is no faith, as in the Heathens, in the Scribes and Pharisees, and in the Papists, and others; and on the other hand, there may be the principle of faith implanted, where there is not an opportunity of showing it by a series of good works, or a course of godly living, as in elect infants dying in infancy, and in those who are converted in their last moments, as the thief upon the cross; wherefore works are not infallible proofs and evidences of faith, yet they are the best we are capable of giving of it to men, or they of receiving. In short, works may deceive, and do not infallibly prove truth of faith, yet it is certain, that where they are not, but persons live in a continued course of sinning, there cannot be true faith.

**Ver. 19.** *Thou believest that there is one God*, etc.] These words are a continuation of the address of the man that has works, to him that boasts of his faith without them, observing to him, that one, and a main article of his faith, is, that there is one God; which is to be understood in the Christian sense, since both the person speaking, and the person spoken to, were such as professed themselves Christians; so that to believe there is one God, is not merely to give into this article, in opposition to the polytheism of the Gentiles, or barely to confess the God of Israel, as believed on by the Jews, but to believe that there are three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, and that these three are the one God; wherefore this article of faith includes everything relating to God; as to God the Father, his being and perfections, so to Christ, as God, and the Son of God, and the Messiah, etc. and to the Holy Spirit; and to believe all this is right:

*thou doest well*; for that there is but one God, is to be proved by the light of nature, and from the works of creation and providence, and has been owned by the wisest of the Heathens themselves; and is established, by divine revelation, in the books both of the Old and of the New Testament;

what has been received by the Jews, and is well known by Christians, to whom it is set in the clearest light, and who are assured of the truth of it: but then

*the devils also believe*; the Arabic version reads, “the devils likewise so believe”; they believe the same truth; they know and believe there is but one God, and not many; and they know that the God of Israel is he; and that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are the one God; they know and believe him to be the most high God, whose servants the ministers of the Gospel are; and they know and believe that Jesus is the Holy One of God, the Son of God, and the Messiah, (<sup><4167></sup>Acts 16:17 19:15 <sup><4168></sup>Luke 4:34,41).

*And tremble*; at the wrath of God, which they now feel, and at the thought of future torments, which they expect, (<sup><4169></sup>Mark 5:7 <sup><4170></sup>Matthew 8:29) and which is more than some men do; and yet these shall not be saved, their damnation is certain and inevitable, (<sup><4171></sup>2 Peter 2:4 <sup><4172></sup>Jude 1:6) wherefore it follows, that a bare historical faith will not profit, and cannot save any; a man may have all faith of this kind, and be damned; and therefore it is not to be boasted of, nor trusted to.

**Ver. 20.** *But wilt thou know, O vain man*, etc.] These are the words of the apostle reassuming the argument, that faith without works is dead, useless, and unprofitable; and the man that boasts of his faith, and has no works to show it, he calls a “vain man”, an empty one, sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal; empty vessels make the greatest sound; such are proud boasters, vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind; but are empty of the true knowledge of God, and of the faith of Christ, and of the grace of the Spirit: the Syriac version renders it, “O weak”, or “feeble man”, as he must needs be, whose faith is dead, and boasts of such a lifeless thing; and the Ethiopic version renders it, “O foolish man”, for such an one betrays his ignorance in spiritual things, whatever conceit he has of his knowledge and understanding: the character seems levelled against the Gnostics, who were swelled with a vain opinion of their knowledge, to whom the apostle addresses himself thus. The phrase, “vain man”, is a proper interpretation of the word *aqyr*, “Raca”, or Reka, used in (<sup><4173></sup>Matthew 5:22), (see Gill on “<sup><4174></sup>Matthew 5:22”), which though not to be said to a man in an angry way, yet may be applied to men of such a character as here described; who were empty of solid good, and yet boasted of their knowledge. “Wilt thou know?” dost thou require proofs,

*that faith, without works, is dead?* as in (<sup><5017></sup>James 2:17) and that true faith has always works accompanying it, and is shown and known by it? then take the following instances.

**Ver. 21.** *Was not Abraham our father justified by works*, etc.] Not as the causes of his justification, that is denied, (<sup><5012></sup>Romans 4:2) but as effects of it, showing the truth of his faith, and the reality of his justification: he had both faith and works, and the former were known by the latter; and even the faith which he had expressed years ago was manifested, demonstrated, and confirmed to be true and genuine, by the instance of his obedience to God, here produced; by which it appeared he was a true believer, a justified person, approved of God, and loved by him. Now if this was the case of Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, yea, the father of the faithful, of all that believe, he is, and must be a vain man, that talks of faith without works; and his faith must be a dead one, and he be very unlike the father of them that believe: the good work instanced in is the offering up of Isaac;

*when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar*: for when he was bid to take his son, his only and beloved son, Isaac, and offer him up on one of the mountains, that should be shown him, he made haste to do it; he provided everything for it; he split the wood, and carried it with him, and fire in his hand; he built an altar, laid the wood on it, bound his son, laid the wood on the altar, and his son on the wood, and stretched out his hand, with his knife in it, to slay him; so that it was all one, with respect to his intention and will, as if he had actually offered him, and was a full trial and proof of his obedience to God. This was not the only act of obedience, or good work, which he performed; but this being a very eminent one, the apostle instances in it, as a very considerable evidence of his faith in God, and love to him; and which showed him to be a justified person, as he was long before he performed this action, even before Isaac was born; (see <sup><0156></sup>Genesis 15:6) and therefore it can never be the apostle's meaning, that he was justified before God by this, or any other good work or works, as cause or causes of it; but only that he was declared to be so; or, in other words, that his faith was attended with good works, and evidenced by them.

**Ver. 22.** *Seest thou how faith wrought with his works*, etc.] Not to justify him before God; for neither faith nor works are ever said in Scripture to justify any man; but his faith being of the right kind, a faith which works by love, it put him upon doing this work, and many others; for this was done



in faith, (<sup><38117></sup>Hebrews 11:17-19) as all good works are, which are properly such; and where there is true faith, it will influence and engage a man to do good works, as it did Abraham.

*And by works was faith made perfect?* not with an absolute perfection; for though Abraham's faith was very great, yet there were things lacking in it, and he had his fits and times of unbelief; and had he lived till now, his faith, in this sense, would not have been perfect; and he would have had reason to have used the apostle's petition, (<sup><42705></sup>Luke 17:5) much less would it have been made thus perfect by works; but the sense is, that hereby his faith was declared to be sincere, unfeigned, true, and genuine; just as love is said to be perfected, (<sup><60417></sup>1 John 4:17).

**Ver. 23.** *And the Scripture was fulfilled,* etc.] (<sup><01516></sup>Genesis 15:6) which speaks of Abraham's faith, and the imputation of to him for righteousness; for the above action of Abraham, in offering up his son, was a clear proof of the truth of his faith, there commended: by this it was made known what a strong faith he had in God, and what reason there was to believe that he was a justified person.

*Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness;* (See Gill on "<sup><48018></sup>Romans 4:3") which shows both that Abraham was justified before he wrought this work, and therefore that could not be the cause or matter of his justification, but only an effect and evidence of it; and that his justification was by faith, or that object which his faith regarded, and had to do with, was his justifying righteousness:

*and he was called the friend of God,* (<sup><44107></sup>2 Chronicles 20:7 <sup><23408></sup>Isaiah 41:8) he was loved by God with an everlasting love, who showed acts of friendship to him; called him by his grace, and blessed him with spiritual blessings, and increased him with the increase of God; favoured him with near communion with him, honoured him with high characters, and distinguished him by peculiar marks of his favour, and reckoned his enemies and friends as his own; (<sup><01218></sup>Genesis 12:8) and Abraham, on the other hand, loved God, and showed himself friendly to him; trusted in him, and believed every word of his; readily complied with his will, and not only yielded a cheerful obedience to his commands, but enjoined his children after him to observe them: this was a name which Abraham was well known by among the eastern nations; hence he is called by the

Mahometans, *hl l a l y l j* , “Khalil Allah”, the friend of God; and Mahomet says himself<sup>f27</sup> ,

“God took Abraham for his friend.”

**Ver. 24.** *Ye see then how that by works a man is justified*, etc.] Not as causes procuring his justification, but as effects declaring it; for the best works are imperfect, and cannot be a righteousness justifying in the sight of God, and are unprofitable in this respect; for when they are performed in the best manner, they are no other than what it is a man's duty to perform, and therefore cannot justify from sin he has committed: and besides, justification in this sense would frustrate the grace of God, make void the death of Christ, and encourage boasting in men. Good works do not go before justification as causes or conditions, but follow it as fruits and effects:

*and not by faith only*: or as without works, or a mere historical faith, which being without works is dead, of which the apostle is speaking; and therefore can bear no testimony to a man's justification; hence it appears, that the Apostle James does not contradict the Apostle Paul in ( ~~ERR~~ Romans 3:28) since they speak not of the same sort of faith; the one speaks of a mere profession of faith, a dead and lifeless one; the other of a true faith, which has Christ, and his righteousness, for its object, and works by love, and produces peace, joy, and comfort in the soul. Moreover, the Apostle Paul speaks of justification before God; and James speaks of it as it is known by its fruits unto men; the one speaks of a justification of their persons, in the sight of God; the other of the justification and approbation of their cause, their conduct, and their faith before men, and the vindication of them from all charges and calumnies of hypocrisy, and the like; the one speaks of good works as causes, which he denies to have any place as such in justification; and the other speaks of them as effects flowing from faith, and showing the truth of it, and so of justification by it; the one had to do with legalists and self-justiciaries, who sought righteousness not by faith, but by the works of the law, whom he opposed; and the other had to do with libertines, who cried up faith and knowledge, but had no regard to a religious life and conversation; and these things considered will tend to reconcile the two apostles about this business, but as effects declaring it; for the best works are imperfect, and cannot be a righteousness justifying in the sight of God, and are unprofitable in this respect; for when they are performed in the best manner, they are no other than what it is a man's duty

to perform, and therefore cannot justify from sin he has committed: and besides, justification in this sense would frustrate the grace of God, make void the death of Christ, and encourage boasting in men. Good works do not go before justification as causes or conditions, but follow it as fruits and effects:

*and not by faith only*: or as without works, or a mere historical faith, which being without works is dead, of which the apostle is speaking; and therefore can bear no testimony to a man's justification; hence it appears, that the Apostle James does not contradict the Apostle Paul in (<sup><813></sup>Romans 3:28) since they speak not of the same sort of faith; the one speaks of a mere profession of faith, a dead and lifeless one; the other of a true faith, which has Christ, and his righteousness, for its object, and works by love, and produces peace, joy, and comfort in the soul. Moreover, the Apostle Paul speaks of justification before God; and James speaks of it as it is known by its fruits unto men; the one speaks of a justification of their persons, in the sight of God; the other of the justification and approbation of their cause, their conduct, and their faith before men, and the vindication of them from all charges and calumnies of hypocrisy, and the like; the one speaks of good works as causes, which he denies to have any place as such in justification; and the other speaks of them as effects flowing from faith, and showing the truth of it, and so of justification by it; the one had to do with legalists and self-justiciaries, who sought righteousness not by faith, but by the works of the law, whom he opposed; and the other had to do with libertines, who cried up faith and knowledge, but had no regard to a religious life and conversation; and these things considered will tend to reconcile the two apostles about this business.

**Ver. 25.** *Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot*, etc.] (See Gill on <sup><813></sup>Hebrews 11:31") justified by works; this woman was an instance of the grace of God in calling the chief of sinners, and was a true believer; and what she did, she did in faith, (<sup><813></sup>Hebrews 11:31) and her faith was shown by her works to be true and genuine; and it was manifest that she was a justified person. This instance is produced with the other, to show, that wherever there is true faith, whether in Jew or Gentile, in man or woman, in greater or lesser believers, or in such who have been greater or lesser sinners, there will be good works; and therefore that person is a vain man that talks and boasts of his faith, and depends upon it, and slights and rejects good works as unnecessary to be done.

*When she had received the messengers:* the spies that Joshua sent, into her house, with peace and safety:

*and had sent them out another way;* than they came in, even through the window upon the town wall, (<sup><BIB></sup>Joshua 2:1,15).

**Ver. 26.** *For as the body without the spirit is dead,* etc.] This simile is made use of to illustrate what the apostle had asserted in (<sup><BIB></sup>James 2:17,20) that as a body, when the spirit or soul is departed from it, or the breath is gone out of it, is dead, and without motion, and useless; which the Jews<sup>f28</sup> express in like manner, *j wr al b Pwg rgp*, “the body without the spirit”, or “breath, is a carcass”.

*So faith without works is dead also:* a vain thing, useless and unprofitable, can neither justify, nor save, nor prove that a man is justified, or will be saved.

# CHAPTER 3

## INTRODUCTION TO JAMES 3

In this chapter the apostle cautions against censoriousness, and reproving others with a magisterial air; advises to bridle the tongue, and guard against the vices of it; and shows what true wisdom is, and from whence it comes. He advises the saints not to arrogate too much to themselves, and take upon them to be the censorious reprovers of others; which he dissuades from, by the consideration of the greater damnation such shall receive, and by the frailty of all men, and a common proneness to offend by words; for he must be a very singular man indeed that does not offend by words, (~~SURE~~ James 3:1,2) wherefore he exhorts them to watch over their words, and bridle their tongues; which he illustrates by the methods used with horses to keep them in subjection, and with ships, to turn them as occasion serves, and the master pleases, (~~SURE~~ James 3:3,4) and though the tongue is a little member, and not comparable to a horse, or ship, for its bulk; yet it boasts of great things, has a world of iniquity in it, and much mischief is done by it, being influenced by the powers of hell; therefore care, and all possible means, should be used to restrain it, (~~SURE~~ James 3:5,6) though it is not tameable by man, only by the Lord, when all sorts of creatures are, even the most fierce and savage, and therefore are worse than they, being an unruly evil, and full of deadly poison, (~~SURE~~ James 3:7,8). And what is the most monstrous and shocking, blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth, are pronounced by the same tongue, which is used in blessing God, and cursing men made after his image, which by no means ought to be done, (~~SURE~~ James 3:9,10) and which is not to be paralleled in nature; no instance like it can be given, no fountain sending forth, in the same place, water sweet and bitter, salt and fresh, or any fig tree bearing olives, or vine figs, (~~SURE~~ James 3:11,12). And because all this evil springs from a vain opinion men have of their own wisdom, the apostle proceeds to give an account of true wisdom; and observes, that that shows itself in good works, in a holy conversation, attended with meekness and humility, and not in envying, strife, and lies, (~~SURE~~ James 3:13,14). Such sort of wisdom is not from heaven, but of the earth; it is not rational; it is no better than that of brutes; yea, no other than that of devils, since where the above

sins prevail, it is a hell on earth, there is nothing but confusion, and everything that is vile and wicked, (<sup><3015></sup>James 3:15,16) but, on the other hand, true wisdom is of an heavenly original, of a pure, peaceable, gentle, and tractable nature, and is full of good fruits or works in its effects, particularly mercy, and is clear of partiality and hypocrisy, (<sup><3017></sup>James 3:17) and as one of its fruits is righteousness, that is sown in peace by the peacemaker, and produces it, (<sup><3018></sup>James 3:18).

**Ver. 1.** *My brethren, be not many masters,* etc.] The apostle having dispatched the subject of faith and good works, which constitute the pure and undefiled religion mentioned in (<sup><3027></sup>James 1:27) which gave rise to this discourse, he proceeds to consider the evidence of a religious man, suggested in (<sup><3026></sup>James 1:26) who is one that bridles the tongue; and enters into an account of the use and abuse of the tongue: and which is introduced by this exhortation; and which seems to be opposed to an affectation among the Jews, to whom James writes, of being called “Rabbi, Rabbi”, or “Mori, Mori”, master, master, condemned by Christ, (<sup><3028></sup>Matthew 23:8,10). The words may be rendered, “be not many teachers”; or be not fond, and forward, and ambitious of being preachers of the word, but rather choose to be hearers of it, agreeably to the advice in (<sup><3019></sup>James 1:19), “be swift to hear, slow to speak”; not but that the office of a teacher is a good work, and a very desirable one; and spiritual gifts, qualifying for it, are to be coveted with a view to the glory of God, and the good of souls; and to have many teachers is a blessing to the churches of Christ and a large number of them is often not only proper, but absolutely necessary: but then this office should not be entered upon without suitable gifts, a divine mission, and a regular call by a church; and when entered into, should not be performed in a magisterial way, as lords over God's heritage, and as claiming a dominion over the faith of men, but as helpers of their joy, peace, and comfort; nor according to the commandments of men, but according to the oracles of God. Or it may be, this exhortation may have respect to censorious persons, rigid and severe reprovers of others, who take upon them, in a haughty manner, to charge and rebuke others for their faults; reproof for sin ought to be given; sin should not be suffered upon the brethren; to reprove is not blameworthy, but commendable, when it is done in a right manner, with a good spirit, and to a good end: in case of private offences, it should be privately given, and for public ones, men should be rebuked before all; but then this ought to be done in a gentle manner, and in a spirit of meekness; and when it is a clear

case, and plain matter of fact, and which ought not to be exaggerated and aggravated; mole hills are not to be made mountains of, or a man be made an offender for a word, or a matter of human frailty; and reproof should be given by persons not guilty of the same, or worse crimes, themselves, and always with a good end; not to screen and cover their own vices, or to be thought more holy and religious than others, or to satisfy a revengeful spirit, but for the glory of God, and the restoring of the person that has sinned.

*Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation:* should men enter into the office of teaching others without a call, or perform it negligently, or live not according to the doctrine they teach others, such would be judged out of their own mouths, and by their own words, and their condemnation would be aggravated; and should men judge rash judgment, they themselves will be judged at a higher tribunal; and should they be too censorious, and bear too hard on others, they will have judgment without mercy.

**Ver. 2.** *For in many things we offend all*, etc.] Or “we all offend”, slip and fall; no man lives without sin; in many, in most, if not in all things, a good man himself does, he sins; and this extends to the most solemn services, and best works of a good man; there is sin in his holy things, imperfections in all his performances; his righteousnesses are as filthy rags; hence no man can be justified by his works before God, nor is any man perfect in this life, so as to be without sin in himself: the apostle includes himself in this account, and that not out of modesty merely, or in a complaisant way, but as matter of fact, and what he found in himself, and observed in the conduct of his life: and now this is given as a reason why persons should not be anxious of teaching others, since in many instances, in common speech and conversation, men are apt to offend, and much more in a work which requires a multitude of words; or why men should be careful how they charge, censure, and reprove others, in a rash, furious, and unchristian manner; since they themselves are in the body, and may be tempted, and are attended with many infirmities, slips, and falls in common life.

*If any man offend not in word;* from slips and falls in general, the apostle proceeds to the slips of the tongue, and to the use and abuse of that member; and his sense is, that if a man has so much guard upon himself, and such a command over his tongue, and so much wisdom to use it, as to give no offence by it, to his fellow creatures, and fellow Christians:

*the same is a perfect man*; not that he is perfect in himself, and without sin, that is denied before; unless this is considered as a mere hypothesis, and by way of concession; that could there be found out a man that never, for instance, offends in word in anyone part of life, that man may be allowed, and be set down to be a perfect man; but no such man is to be found, and therefore none perfect: but rather the sense is, that he who in common is so careful of his speech, as not to offend his brethren, may be looked upon as a sincere and truly religious man; (see <sup><5026></sup>James 1:26) or he may be accounted a wise and prudent man, such an one as in (<sup><5013></sup>James 3:13) he is not a babe in understanding, a child in conduct, but a grown man; at full age; a perfect man; in which sense the word is used in (<sup><4016></sup>1 Corinthians 2:6 <sup><3814></sup>Hebrews 5:14).

*And able also to bridle the whole body*; either to govern the whole body, the church, to teach a society of Christians, and to feed them with knowledge, and with understanding; or rather, as he appears to be able to bridle that member of the body, the tongue, so likewise to be able, through the grace of God, to keep under the whole body, that sin shall not reign in it, or the lusts of it be in common obeyed.

**Ver. 3.** *Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths*, etc.] By this, and the following simile, the apostle not only expresses the smallness of that member of the body, which is like the bit in the horse's mouth, and the helm of a ship, but the good use of it, and the great influence it has over the whole body. Horses are without understanding, and need direction in what path to go, and are strong, and would be truly and ungovernable unless bits and bridles were put into their mouths:

*that they may obey us*; and go in the way we would have them:

*and we turn about the whole body* of the horse, this way, and that way, as is thought best, by the help of the bit and bridle; and of such use is the tongue to the natural body, that being bridled itself, bridles, directs, and governs the whole body; and its influence on bodies, and societies of men, and Christians, is like that of the bit in the horse's mouth; who, like horses, would be unruly and ungovernable, were it not for the force of language, the power of words, and strength of argument.

**Ver. 4.** *Behold also the ships, which though they be so great*, etc.] Of so large a bulk, of such a prodigious size, and are such unwieldy vessels:



*and are driven of fierce winds*; with great vehemence, rapidity, and swiftness:

*yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth*; the helm, or tiller of a ship, is a beam or piece of timber fastened into the rudder, and so coming forward into the steerage, where he that stands at helm steers the ship <sup>f29</sup>, who is here called the governor; or “he that directs”, as the word may be rendered; that is, that steers; the word for “helm” is translated rudder in (<sup><4274></sup>Acts 27:40), and the helm or tiller is sometimes, though improperly, called the rudder itself <sup>f30</sup>; and this is very small, in comparison of the bulk of the ship that is guided by it <sup>f31</sup>. Aristotle calls it *πηδάλιον μικρον*, “a small helm”, as the apostle here does, and accounts for it how large ships should be moved and steered by it. And so, though the tongue is to the rest of the body as a small helm to a large ship, yet, like that, it has great influence over the whole body, to check it when it is carrying away with the force of its appetites and passions; and so churches, societies, and bodies of Christians, which are large and numerous, and are like ships upon the ocean, tossed to and fro with tempests, driven by Satan's temptations and the world's persecution, and ready to be carried away with the wind of false doctrine, yet are influenced and directed aright by those that are at the helm, the faithful ministers of the word, who say to them, this is the way, walk in it.

**Ver. 5.** *Even so the tongue is a little member*, etc.] Like the bit in the horse's mouth, or like the helm of a ship.

*And boasteth great things*: and does them; for this word may be taken in a good sense: a bridled and sanctified tongue, that is influenced by the grace of God, and directed by the Spirit of God, as it speaks great and good things, it has great power, weight, and influence: the tongue of the just is as choice silver, and the lips of the righteous feed many, (<sup><2000></sup>Proverbs 10:20,21), the Gospel, as preached by Christ's faithful ministers, who are the church's tongue, when it comes not in word only, but in power, is the power of God unto salvation: faith comes by hearing it, and hearing by this word; by it souls are convinced, converted, and comforted, enlightened, quickened, and sanctified.

*Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth*; what vast quantities of wood, large forests, stately buildings, and populous towns and cities, are at once seized on by a little fire, a few sparks, and in a short time burnt down,

and utterly destroyed. One of the proverbs of Ben Syra is, “burning fire kindles great heaps;”

suggesting, that an evil tongue does great mischief, as did the tongue of Doeg the Edomite, as the gloss upon it observes: from hence the apostle passes to consider the abuse or vices of the tongue.

**Ver. 6.** *And the tongue is a fire*, etc.] It is like to fire, very useful in its place, to warm and comfort; so is the tongue in Christian conversation, and in the ministry of the word; the hearts of God's children burn within them, while they are talking together, and while the Scriptures of truth are opening to them; but as fire should be carefully watched, and kept, so should men take heed to their ways, that they sin not with their tongue, and keep their tongue from evil, and their lips from speaking guile; for as fire kindles and rises up into a flame, so unchaste, angry, and passionate words, stir up the flame of lust, anger, envy, and revenge; and as fire is of a spreading nature, so are lies, scandal, and evil reports vented by the tongue; and as fire devours all that comes in its way, such are the words of an evil tongue; and therefore are called devouring words, (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 52:4) they devour the good names of men, and corrupt their good manners, and destroy those who make use of them; and what wood is to fire, and coals to burning coals, that are whisperers, tale bearers, backbiters, and contentious persons to strife, (~~Proverbs~~ Proverbs 26:20,21)

*a world of iniquity*; that is, as the world is full of things, and full of sin, for it lies in wickedness, so is the tongue full of iniquity; there is a world of it in it; it abounds with it; it cannot well be said how much sin is in it, and done, or occasioned by it; as blasphemy against God, Father, Son, and Spirit; cursing of men, imprecations on themselves, their souls, and bodies, and on others, with a multitude of profane and dreadful oaths; obscene, filthy, and unchaste words; angry, wrathful, and passionate ones; lies, flatteries, reproaches, backbitings, whisperings, tale bearings, etc. And the Jews say, that he that uses an evil tongue multiplies transgression, and that it is equal to idolatry, adultery, and murder<sup>f32</sup>, and the cause of all sin; and which they express by way of fable, in this manner<sup>f33</sup>:

“when Adam sinned, God laid hold on him, and slit his tongue into two parts, and said unto him, the wickedness which is, or shall be in the world, thou hast begun with an evil tongue; wherefore I will make all that come into the world know that thy tongue is the cause of all this.”

The Syriac version renders this clause thus, “and the world of iniquity is as wood”; or the branch of a tree; the tongue is fire, and a wicked world is fuel to it.

*So is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body:* the body politic, a whole nation, filling it with contention, strife, division, and confusion; and the ecclesiastical body, the church, by sowing discord, fomenting animosities, making parties, and spreading errors and heresies, whereby the temple of God is defiled; and the natural body, and the several members of it, even the whole person of a man, soul and body, bringing upon him a blot of infamy and reproach never to be wiped off; as for instance, the vice of the tongue, lying, does; and oftentimes through the tongue, the actions done in the body, which seem good, are quite spoiled:

*and setteth on fire the course of nature,* or “wheel of nature”: the natural body, as before, in which there is a continual rotation or circulation of the blood, by which it is supported; this is the wheel broken at the cistern at death, in (<sup><2116></sup>Ecclesiastes 12:6) or the course of a man's life and actions, yea, of all generations, and the vicissitudes and changes which have happened in them, on which the tongue has a great influence; and so the Syriac version renders it, “and sets on fire the series of our genealogies, or our generations, which run like wheels”: or it may intend the frame of nature, the whole fabric of the universe, and the general conflagration of it, which will be owing to the tongue; or because men's tongues are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory, because of the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Christ and his people, of which they will be convinced by flames of fire about them:

*and it is set on fire of hell;* that is, by the devil; for as heaven sometimes is put for God, who dwells in heaven, (<sup><1025></sup>Matthew 21:25 <sup><2518></sup>Luke 15:18) so hell is put for the devil, whose habitation it is; (see <sup><1018></sup>Matthew 16:18), and the sense is, that the tongue is influenced, instigated, and stirred up by Satan, to speak many evil things, and it will be hereafter set on fire in hell, as the tongue of the rich man in (<sup><2124></sup>Luke 16:24). To which purpose are those words of the Talmud <sup>f34</sup>;

“whoever uses an evil tongue, the holy blessed God says to hell, I concerning him above, and thou concerning him below, will judge him, as it is said, (<sup><3018></sup>Psalms 120:3,4). “What shall be done to thee, thou false tongue? sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper”, there is no arrow but the tongue, according to

(<sup>249B</sup>Jeremiah 9:8) and there is no mighty one but God, (<sup>24213</sup>Isaiah 42:13) “coals of juniper”, *μnhyg wnyyh*, these are hell.”

**Ver. 7.** *For every kind of beasts, and of birds*, etc.] Or the “nature” of them, as it is in the Greek text; however fierce, as beasts of prey are, or shy, as the fowls of the air be:

*and of serpents and things in the sea*; the fishes there:

*is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind*, or “by human nature”: by the wit and industry of man; by the various ways, means, and methods devised by man. So Pliny<sup>f35</sup> relates, that elephants lions and tigers among beasts, and the eagle among birds, and crocodiles, asps, and other serpents, and fishes of the sea, have been tamed: though some think this is only to be understood of their being mastered and subdued, by one means or another; or of their being despoiled of their power, or of their poison: and the Syriac and Ethiopic versions render it, “subjected to human nature”.

**Ver. 8.** *But the tongue can no man tame*, etc.] Either his own, or others; not his own, for the man that has the greatest guard upon himself, his words and actions; yet, what through pride or passion, or one lust or another in his heart, at one time or another, bolts out vain, idle, angry, and sinful words: and he that does not may be set down for a perfect man indeed: nor can he tame or restrain the tongues of others from detraction, calumnies, backbitings, and whisperings; who say, their lips are their own, and who is Lord over us? no man can, by his own power and strength, tame or subdue his tongue, or restrain it from evils it is habituated to, be it lying, cursing, swearing, or what else: God, by his Spirit, power, and grace, can, and often does, change the note of the curser, swearer, liar, and blasphemer; but no man can do this, though he can tame beasts, birds, serpents, and fishes; which shows the tongue to be worse than anything to be found in the whole compass of nature:

*[it is an] unruly evil*: an evil it is, for it is a world of iniquity; and an unruly one, being more so than the horse and mule, which are without understanding, who are kept in and governed, and turned any way by the bit and bridle: but though in nature the tongue is fenced by a double fence of the lips and teeth, this is not sufficient to restrain it; it breaks all bounds, and is not to be kept in by nature, art, or argument: nothing but the grace of God can in any measure govern it, or lay an embargo on it:

*full of deadly poison*, which, privately, secretly, and gradually, destroys the characters, credit, and reputation of men; and is of fatal consequence in families, neighbourhoods, churches, and states.

**Ver. 9.** *Therewith bless we God, even, the Father*, etc.] Of Jesus Christ, and of spirits, and of mercies: this is the instrument that is used in blessing God daily every meal that is eaten; and in joining with the saints, though only verbally and outwardly, in blessing God for all spiritual blessings in Christ, both in prayer, and in singing psalms:

*and therewith curse we men*: make imprecations, and wish evils upon them:

*which are made after the similitude of God* as man was originally, (<sup><0025></sup>Genesis 1:26,27) and though sin has greatly defaced it, yet there are still some remains of it: and now, what an absurd and monstrous thing is this, that one and the same instrument should be used in blessing God, the Father of all creatures, and in cursing his children, his offering, as all men are by creation, and bear some resemblance to him.

**Ver. 10.** *Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing*, etc.] Which is not only a contradiction, but unnatural, as well as wicked and sinful:

*my brethren, these things ought not so to be*: in any, and much less in professors of religion: such things are unbecoming men, are a scandal upon human nature, and exceeding unworthy of the Christian name; (see <sup><016></sup>Psalm 50:16,19,20).

**Ver. 11.** *Doth a fountain send forth at the same place*, etc.] “Or hole”; for at divers places, and at different times, as Pliny<sup>f36</sup> observes, it may send forth

*sweet [water] and bitter*: and it is reported<sup>f37</sup>, there is a lake with the Trogloditae, a people in Ethiopia, which becomes thrice a day bitter, and then as often sweet; but then it does not yield sweet water and bitter at the same time: this simile is used to show how unnatural it is that blessing and cursing should proceed out of the same mouth.

**Ver. 12.** *Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries?* etc.] Every tree bears fruit, according to its kind; a fig tree produces figs, and an olive tree olive berries; a fig tree does not produce olive berries, or an olive tree figs; and neither of them both:

*either a vine, figs?* or fig trees, grapes; or either of them, figs and grapes:

*so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.* The Alexandrian copy reads, “neither can the salt water yield sweet water”; that is, the sea cannot yield sweet or fresh water: the Syriac version renders it, “neither can salt water be made sweet”: but naturalists say, it may be made sweet, by being strained through sand: the design of these similes is to observe how absurd a thing it is that a man should both bless and curse with his tongue.

**Ver. 13.** *Who is a wise man.*] Meaning, not in things natural and civil, or merely moral, but in things spiritual: and he is a wise man, who is both wise to do good, and wise unto salvation; who has learned to know his own ignorance, folly, and stupidity; for the first lesson in the school of spiritual wisdom is for a man to know that he is a fool: and he is a wise man who considers his latter end, thinks of a future state, and what will become of him in another world; and who builds his faith and hope of eternal salvation on the sure and only foundation, the rock Christ Jesus; and who takes up a profession of religion upon principles of grace, and with views to the glory of God, and, upon mature deliberation, reckoning the cost, and what he must expect to meet with; and which he holds fast, without wavering, and yet does not depend upon it; and who walks circumspectly, and with wisdom, towards them that are without; and who observes both providences and promises, for the encouragement of his faith; and keeps looking to the mark for the prize, preferring heavenly things to earthly ones.

*And endued with knowledge amongst you?* as he is, who is endued with the knowledge of himself; of the impurity of his nature, and the plague of his heart; and of his impotency and inability to do any thing that is spiritually good of himself; and of the imperfection and insufficiency of his righteousness to justify him before God; and of his lost state and condition by nature, how deserving of the wrath of God, and obnoxious to the curses of the law; and how miserable he must be without the grace of God and righteousness of Christ: and who is also endued with the knowledge of Christ, so as to see a fulness, suitableness, and ability in him as a Saviour; so as to love him, approve of him, as such, and trust in him; which knowledge is always practical and soul humbling; and the least degree of it saving; and though it is imperfect, it is growing, and will at last come to perfection: now such a man is a Gnostic, in the best sense; for this question is put with a view to the Gnostics of those times, who valued themselves

upon their knowledge, and despised practical religion and godliness: hence it follows,

*let him show out of a good conversation his works, with meekness of wisdom*; such an one ought to perform good works, and he will perform them; and it is right in him to show them forth, that they may be a means of others glorifying God upon the sight of them; and that they may be evidences of the truth of faith in themselves to others; and that they may be for the imitation of others; and that they may put to silence, and stop the mouths of false accusers, and adorn the Gospel, and recommend religion: and these should be shown forth “out of a good conversation”; not in a single act or two, but in a series and course of living; which may be said to be good, when it is ordered aright, according to the word of God, and is honest among the Gentiles, and upright and holy; and is as becomes the Gospel of Christ, and is worthy of the calling of God to grace and glory; and when it is influenced by the grace of God: and the works shown out of it, and in it, are done in faith, from love in the strength of Christ, and are directed to the glory of God: and all this should be “with meekness of wisdom”; in a wise and humble manner, without trusting to, and depending upon, such works for justification and salvation; and without glorying in them, and boasting of them; acknowledging the deficiency and imperfection of them, and his own weakness in the performance of them; and ascribing them to the power and grace of God, by the assistance of which they are performed.

**Ver. 14.** *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts*, etc.]

Though these may not be expressed by words, or actions: envy at the happiness of others, whether at the external blessings of Providence, as riches and honours, or at the internal endowments of their minds, as their wisdom and knowledge, their parts and abilities, is a root of bitterness in the heart, which bears wormwood and gall, and produces bitter effects in the persons in whom it is; it embitters their minds against their neighbours and friends; it is rottenness in their bones, and slays and destroys those who are so silly as to be governed by it; and also in the persons the objects of it; for who can stand before it? and strife in the mind, or an intention to strive and quarrel with others, who are the objects of envy, is very sinful, and of pernicious consequence: and if these be fomented and cherished in the minds and breasts of men, though they may not outwardly show themselves, yet

*glory not*; let not such boast of their being Gnostics, wise men, and endued with knowledge; they are far from deserving such a character; and such boasting is contrary to truth, yea, is lying against it, as follows:

*and lie not against the truth*; for, for a man to assert himself to be a wise and knowing man, and yet cherishes bitterness in his heart, and quarrelling and contention in his mind, arising from envy, at the equal or superior knowledge of others, he lies both against the truth of God's word and his own conscience, which condemn such things as ignorance, folly, and madness.

**Ver. 15.** *This wisdom descendeth not from above*, etc.] If it must be called wisdom, as it ought not; an envious, quarrelsome, and contentious spirit, does not deserve such a name; yet if any will call it so, or can think that a man of such a disposition is a man possessed of wisdom; it is such wisdom as does not come from above, from heaven, from the Father of lights, from Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and from the spirit of wisdom and revelation: what the Jews say<sup>f38</sup> of the wisdom of Egypt, may be said of this, that it is **hatt hmkj** “wisdom from below”, or inferior wisdom, as it follows:

*but is earthly, sensual, and devilish*; it is “earthly”, or of the earth, and springs from thence; and it is only conversant about earthly things, and is only suitable to earthly minds: it is sensual, or natural; what a natural man, one destitute of the Spirit of God, and without the knowledge of the things of the Spirit, may have; it is what is acquired by the mere strength of nature, and only relates to natural things; and is only agreeable to corrupt nature, or to a natural and unregenerate man: yea, it is devilish, or such as the devil himself has; and which comes from him, and being used, serves only his kingdom and interest.

**Ver. 16.** *For where envying and strife is*, etc.] Where these are cherished in the heart, and especially where they break out into action, in families, neighbourhoods, states, or churches:

*there is confusion and every evil work*; these occasion disturbances, raise uneasiness, make disquietude, and cause tumults whenever they appear; and put persons upon doing everything that is wicked, to gratify such insatiable lusts.



**Ver. 17.** *But the wisdom that is from above*, etc.] Which has God for its author; which is infused into the soul by the Spirit of God; and leads into the knowledge of things that are above, of heavenly things; and which only is true wisdom and knowledge; and those who are possessed of it are the only true Gnostics; for which, (See Gill on “<sup>SUBB</sup>James 3:13”) namely, the grace of God: this wisdom

*is first pure*; it is pure in itself, it is free from everything that is earthly, carnal, or sensual, or devilish; it produces purity of heart, of life, and conversation; and is the means of keeping persons pure and chaste, and free from impure lusts, lusts of uncleanness, pride, envy, wrath, etc. which prevail in carnal and unregenerate men:

*and then peaceable*; it inclines and engages those who have it to live in peace with the saints, and even with all men; with those of their own household, with their neighbours, yea, with their enemies: it is also “gentle”; or makes men gentle, moderate, and humane, so as that they bear, and forbear; they bear with the infirmities of the weak; readily forgive injuries done them; do not rigidly exact what is their due, but recede from their just right for the sake of peace and love; and do not bear hard upon others for their failings, but cover them with the mantle of love: and it is

*easy to be treated*; or those who have it readily yield to the superior judgments and stronger reasonings of others; and are easily induced to hope and believe all things, and entertain a good opinion of men, and their conduct; and are far from being proud, arrogant, obstinate, and overbearing:

*full of mercy and good fruits*; of compassion and beneficence to the poor; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the widows and fatherless in their affliction; and doing all other good works and duties, both with respect to God and man, as fruits of grace, and of the Spirit:

*without partiality*: to one another; or making a difference between them; showing no respect to persons; bestowing upon the poor and indigent, without any distinction: and

*without hypocrisy*; either with respect to God or man; not making show of that which they have not, or do not intend.

**Ver. 18.** *And the fruit of righteousness*, etc.] Which is either eternal life, which is the fruit of Christ's righteousness, and shall be enjoyed by all those

who are justified by it; and who, in consequence of it, through the grace of God, live soberly, righteously, and godly; (see ~~4162~~Romans 6:22) or else what is enjoyed in this life, as the fruit and effect of a righteous and holy conversation, which is peace of conscience; and may be truly called the peaceable fruit of righteousness; (see ~~2327~~Isaiah 32:17)

*is sown in peace of them that make peace*; that is, either such as are possessed of that wisdom which is peaceable, and makes them so; that peace which they make, pursue after, exercise, and maintain, is a seed, which, being sown by them, will, in the issue, be followed with eternal happiness and felicity; (see ~~4169~~Matthew 5:9) or such who live a godly life and conversation, and are filled with the fruits of righteousness, and, among the rest, with this of making and preserving peace among men, shall enjoy, as what will spring up from such good seed sown, much conscience peace and spiritual pleasure of mind: righteousness and peace promise a large and comfortable harvest both here and hereafter.

# CHAPTER 4

## INTRODUCTION TO JAMES 4

In this chapter the apostle gives the true cause of contentions and strifes; and cautions against intemperance, covetousness, pride, detraction, and vain confidence. Having, in the latter part of the preceding chapter, inveighed against strife and contention, he here shows from whence they spring, from a covetous desire of riches and honour; and which yet are not obtained, because they did not ask these things of God with submission to his will; or they asked with a wrong view, namely, to gratify their lusts, (~~504B~~James 4:1,3) and he dissuades from such unlawful desires, partly because they were no other than adultery; and partly because indulging them was declaring themselves enemies of God, (~~504B~~James 4:4) and he deters from pride, under the name of envy, proud men being generally envious; from the sense of the Scripture, which says, not in vain, that the spirit lusts unto it; and from the consequence of it, such as are proud being resisted by the Lord, when he gives more grace to humble ones, (~~504B~~James 4:5,6) hence follow several exhortations, and various duties relating to humility; as to submit to God, and resist the devil, encouraged thereunto by this motive, he will flee, (~~504B~~James 4:7), to draw nigh to God in a way of religious worship, who will draw nigh in a way of grace to his people; to purity of action, and of heart, or to that which is outward and inward, (~~504B~~James 4:8) to be humbled, mourn, and weep, instead of joy and laughter, (~~504B~~James 4:9) to lie low before the Lord, who will raise such up, (~~504B~~James 4:10) and not to speak evil of anyone, since this is judging a brother; nay, a speaking evil of the law, and a judging of that; which is to invade the prerogative of God, the lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy; and therefore one man should not take upon him to judge another, (~~504B~~James 4:11,12) and as another instance of great neglect of God, and his providence, and disrespect unto it, the apostle takes notice of a common practice among men, and even professors of religion, who resolve to go to such a place, and continue so long, and there make merchandise, and promise themselves success; not considering what frail short lived creatures they are, and how much all depends upon the will of God; and which they should consider, submit to, and be determined by, (~~504B~~James

4:13-15) and he reproves them for their boastings and joy in them, as evil, (<sup><S0416></sup>James 4:16), and observes, that it is not enough to know what is right and good, unless it is done; and that such knowledge is but an aggravation of the evil of sin committed, (<sup><S0417></sup>James 4:17).

**Ver. 1.** *From whence come wars and fightings among you?* etc.] Which are to be understood, not of public and national wars, such as might be between the Jews and other nations at this time; for the apostle is not writing to the Jews in Judea, as a nation, or body politic, but to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, and to such of them as were Christians; nor were Christians in general as yet increased, and become such large bodies, or were whole nations become Christians, and much less at war one against another, which has been the case since; and which, when it is, generally speaking arises from a lust after an increase of power; from the pride and ambitious views of men, and their envy at the happiness of other princes and states: nor do these design theological debates and disputes, or contentions about religious principles; but rather lawsuits, commenced before Heathen magistrates, by the rich, to the oppression of the poor; (see <sup><S0416></sup>James 2:6) though it seems best of all to interpret them of those stirs and bustlings, strifes, contentions, and quarrels, about honours and riches; endeavouring to get them by unlawful methods, at least at the expense of their own peace, and that of others:

*[come they] not hence, [even] of your lusts that war in your members?* as pride, envy, covetousness, ambition, etc. which, like so many soldiers, are stationed and quartered in the members of the body, and war against the soul; for in the believer, or converted man, however, there is as it were two armies; a law in the members, warring against the law of the mind; the flesh against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and from this inward war arise external ones; or at least from the corruption of nature, which militates against all that is good, all quarrels and contentions, whether public or private, of a greater or lesser nature, and consequence, spring.

**Ver. 2.** *Ye lust, and have not,* etc.] The apostle proceeds to show the unsuccessfulness of many in their desires and pursuits after worldly things; some might be like the sluggard, whose soul desireth all good things, and yet he has nothing, (<sup><S0414></sup>Proverbs 13:4) because he does not make use of any means, even of such as are proper and necessary, and ought to be used:

*ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain;* some, instead of kill, which seems not so agreeable, read envy; and then the sense is, they envy at the

good and happiness of others, and covet after another's property, but cannot enjoy it; all such envy and covetousness are fruitless, as well as sinful:

*ye fight and war, yet ye have not*; go to law one with another about each other's property; or rather, make a great stir and hustle to get the things of the world; rise early, and sit up late; strive who should get most, and quarrel about what is gotten, and seek to get all advantages of one another; and yet still have not, what at least is desired and strove for:

*because ye ask not*; of God, whose blessing only makes rich: instead of all this worldly stir and bustle, and these strivings and quarrellings with one another, it would be much more advisable, and, in the issue, be found to turn to more account, to pray to God for a blessing on your endeavours; and to ask of him the good and necessary things of life, in submission to his will, and with thankfulness for what he has bestowed.

**Ver. 3.** *Ye ask, and receive not*, etc.] Some there were that did ask of God the blessings of his goodness and providence, and yet these were not bestowed on them; the reason was,

*because ye ask amiss*; not in the faith of a divine promise; nor with thankfulness for past mercies; nor with submission to the will of God; nor with a right end, to do good to others, and to make use of what might be bestowed, for the honour of God, and the interest of Christ: but

*that ye may consume it upon your lusts*; indulge to intemperance and luxury; as the man that had much goods laid up for many years did, to the neglect of his own soul, (~~Q179~~Luke 12:19) or the rich man, who spent all upon his back and his belly, and took no notice of Lazarus at his gate; (~~Q169~~Luke 16:19).

**Ver. 4.** *Ye adulterers and adulteresses*, etc.] Not who were literally such, but in a figurative and metaphorical sense: as he is an adulterer that removes his affections from his own wife, and sets them upon another woman; and she is an adulteress that loves not her husband, but places her love upon another man; so such men and women are adulterers and adulteresses, who, instead of loving God, whom they ought to love with all their hearts and souls, set their affections upon the world, and the things of it: the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, leave out the word “adulteresses”: these the apostle addresses in the following manner;

*know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?* that an immoderate love for the good things of the world, and a prevailing desire after the evil things of it, and a delight in the company and conversation of the men of the world, and a conformity to, and compliance with, the sinful manners and customs of the world, are so many declarations of war with God, and acts of hostility upon him; and show the enmity of the mind against him, and must be highly displeasing to him, and resented by him:

*whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God;* whoever is in league with the one must be an enemy to the other; God and mammon cannot be loved and served by the same persons, at the same time; the one will be loved, and the other hated; the one will be attended to, and the other neglected: this may be known both from reason and from Scripture, particularly from (<sup><0163></sup>Matthew 6:24).

**Ver. 5.** *Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain?* etc.] Some think that the apostle refers to a particular passage of Scripture in the Old Testament, and that he took it from (<sup><0063></sup>Genesis 6:3) as some; or from (<sup><0216></sup>Exodus 20:5), as others; or from (<sup><0502></sup>Deuteronomy 7:2,5) or from (<sup><0806></sup>Job 5:6) or from (<sup><0210></sup>Proverbs 21:10) others think he had in view some text in the New Testament; either (<sup><0502></sup>Romans 12:2) or (<sup><0517></sup>Galatians 5:17) and some have imagined that he refers to a passage in the apocryphal book:

“For into a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter; nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin.” (Wisdom 1:4)

and others have been of opinion that it is taken out of some book of Scripture then extant, but now lost, which by no means can be allowed of: the generality of interpreters, who suppose a particular text of Scripture is referred to, fetch it from (<sup><0412></sup>Numbers 11:29) but it seems best of all to conclude that the apostle has no regard to any one particular passage of Scripture, in which the following words are expressly had, since no such passage appears; but that his meaning is, the sense of the Scripture everywhere, where it speaks of this matter, is to this purpose: nor does it say this, or any thing else in vain; whatever is written there is to answer some end, as for learning, edification, and comfort, for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness; neither with respect to what is before suggested, that what is asked in a right manner, and for a right end, shall be given; and that the love of the world, and the love of God, are things incompatible; nor with respect to what follows:

*the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?* that is, the depraved spirit of man, the spirit of an unregenerate man; that as it is prone to every lust, and prompts to every sin, the imagination of the thought of man's heart being evil, and that continually, so it instigates to envy the happiness of others; (see <sup><OR65></sup>Genesis 6:5 8:21) or this may be put as a distinct question from the other, “does the spirit that dwelleth in us lust to envy?” that is, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the hearts of his people, as in his temple: the Ethiopic version reads, “the Holy Spirit”: and then the sense is, does he lust to envy? no; he lusts against the flesh and the works of it, and envy among the rest; (see <sup><RS17></sup>Galatians 5:17,21) but he does not lust to it, or provoke to it, or put persons upon it; nor does he, as the Arabic version renders it, “desire that we should envy”; he is a spirit of grace; he bestows grace and favours upon men; and is so far from envying, or putting others upon envying any benefit enjoyed by men, that he increases them, adds to them, and enlarges them, as follows.

**Ver. 6.** *But he giveth more grace*, etc.] The Arabic version adds, “to us”; the Ethiopic version, “to you”; and the Syriac version reads the whole thus; “but our Lord gives more grace to us”; or “greater grace”; than the world can give, whose friendship is courted by men; the least measure of grace, of faith, and hope, and love, and of a spiritual knowledge of Christ, and interest in him, and of peace, joy, and comfort, is more worth than all the world, and everything in it: or greater grace, more favours than the saints are able to ask or think; so Solomon had more favours given him than he could think of asking for: or greater grace, and larger measures of it, even of spiritual light and knowledge, under the Gospel dispensation, than under the former dispensation; or where God bestows gifts qualifying for service and usefulness, and these are made use of and employed for such purposes, he gives more: or this may refer to internal grace wrought by the Spirit of God, in the hearts of his people; more of which he may be said to give, when he causes it to abound, as to its acts and exercises; when faith grows exceedingly, hope revives, and is lively, and abounds through his power and influence, and love to God and Christ, and one another, abounds yet more and more; when there is a growth in every grace, and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus, so that this grace becomes a well of living waters, springing up into eternal life, which at last will have its perfection in glory:

*wherefore he saith*; either the Spirit that gives more grace, or the Scripture, or God in the Scripture, in (<sup><OR34></sup>Proverbs 3:34),

*God resisteth the proud:* or scorns the scorers; he rejects them that trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others; that say, Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou; that are proud of themselves, their enjoyments, their gifts, their external righteousness, and holiness, and are full, and rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing; these he opposes, he sets himself against, he thrusts them away from him, he sends them away empty, and scatters them in the imagination of their own hearts; and in the things in which they deal proudly, he is above them; he sits in the heavens and laughs at them, and frustrates all their schemes:

*but he giveth grace unto the humble;* who are sensible of their own vileness and meanness, and acknowledge it; who think the meanest of themselves, and the best of others; and do not envy the gifts and graces of God bestowed upon others, but rejoice at them; and ascribe all they have, and are, to the free grace of God; and ingenuously confess the deficiency of their duties, and the insufficiency of their righteousness to justify them before God; and that when they have done all they can, or are assisted to do, they are but unprofitable servants: now to these God gives grace; he not only gives grace at first, to make them humble, but he gives them more grace, or increases what he gives: grace is God's gift; he gives all the grace that is in Christ, and all the blessings of grace that are in the covenant, and all the grace that is in the hearts of his people; as faith, hope, love, repentance, humility, patience, self-denial, resignation to his will, and every degree of spiritual knowledge; and grace is only his gift; men cannot give it to themselves, nor can the best of men give it to others; not godly parents to their children; nor ministers to those to whom they preach; no, nor the angels in heaven; nor is it to be obtained by the works of men: it is a free gift; it is given of the sovereign will and good pleasure of God, to whom, and when, and in what measure he pleases; to which he is not induced by any motives in men, for they have nothing in them to move him to it; and it is given by him absolutely, without conditions, not suspending it till the performance of them; and he gives it cheerfully and not grudgingly, largely, bountifully, and in great abundance.

**Ver. 7.** *Submit yourselves therefore to God,* etc.] To the will of God, with respect to worldly things, and be content with such things as are enjoyed, and be satisfied with the portion that is allotted; it is right and best for the people of God to leave themselves with him, to choose their inheritance for them, since by all their anxious cares, their striving and struggling, their impatient desires, wars and fightings, as they cannot add one cubit to their



stature, so nothing to their worldly substance; and it becomes them to submit to God in all afflictive dispensations of his providence, and be still and know that he is God; as well as to submit to his way and method of salvation by Christ, and particularly to the righteousness of Christ, for justification; and to depend upon him for supplies of grace in the discharge of every duty, and the exercise of every grace:

*resist the devil, [and] he will flee from you;* Satan is to be looked upon as an enemy, and to be opposed as such, and to be watched and guarded against; the whole armour of God should be taken and made use of, particularly the weapon of prayer, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and the shield of faith; and also the grace of humility, than which nothing is more opposite to him: he is a proud spirit, and he endeavours to swell men with pride of themselves; and when he has worked them up to such a pitch, he is then master of them, and can manage them as he pleases; but a poor humble believer, with whom God dwells, to whom he gives more grace, and who comes forth not in his own strength, but in the strength of the Lord God, as David against Goliath, and who owns his vileness and sinfulness, and flies to the grace of God, and blood of Christ, Satan knows not what to do with him, he is puzzled, baffled, and confounded; such he leaves, from such he flees; he does not like the power of prayer, nor the strength of faith, nor the sharpness of the twoedged sword, the word of God, nor the humble believer's staff, bag, scrip, and sling.

**Ver. 8.** *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you,* etc.] This must be understood consistently with the perfection of God's immensity and omnipresence: the saints draw nigh to God when they present their bodies in his sanctuary; when they tread in his courts, and attend his ordinances; where they always find it good for them to draw nigh unto him; and blessed is the man that approaches to him in faith and fear: they draw nigh to him when they come to the throne of his grace, for grace and mercy to help them; when they draw near to him in prayer with true hearts, and lift them up with their hands to God; when in the exercise of faith and hope they enter within the vail, and come up even to his seat; and lay hold on him as their covenant God and Father; and he draws nigh to them by granting them his gracious presence, by communicating his love to them, by applying the blessings of his grace, by helping them in times of need and distress, and by protecting them from their enemies; the contrary to which is expressed by standing afar off from them. Now this is not to be

understood as if men could first draw nigh to God, before he draws nigh to them; for as God first loves, so he first moves; he takes the first step, and, in conversion, turns and draws men to himself; though this does not respect first conversion, but after acts in consequence of it; nor is it to be considered as a condition of the grace and favour of God, in drawing nigh to his people, but is expressive of what is their duty, and an encouragement to it:

*cleanse [your] hands, ye sinners, and purify [your] hearts, ye double minded*; the persons addressed are not the profane men of the world, but sinners in Zion, formal professors, hypocritical persons; who speak with a double tongue to men, and who draw nigh to God with their mouths, but not with their hearts; who halt between two opinions, and are unstable in all their ways: cleansing of their hands and hearts denotes the purity of outward conversation, and of the inward affections; and supposes impurity both of flesh and spirit, that the body and all its members, the soul and all its powers and faculties, are unclean; and yet not that men have a power to cleanse themselves, either from the filth of an external conversation, or from inward pollution of the heart; though a man attempts the one, he fails in it; and who can say he has done the other? (~~Job~~ Job 9:30,31 ~~Proverbs~~ Proverbs 20:9). This is not to be done by ceremonial ablutions, moral services, or evangelical ordinances; this is God's work only, as appears from his promises to cleanse his people from their sins, by sprinkling clean water upon them; from the end of Christ's shedding his blood, and the efficacy of it; and from the prayers of the saints, that God would wash them thoroughly from their iniquity, and cleanse them from their sin, and create clean hearts in them: and yet such exhortations are not in vain, since they may be useful to convince men of their pollution, who are pure in their own eyes, as these hypocritical, nominal professors, might be; and to bring them to a sense of their inability to cleanse themselves, and of the necessity of being cleansed elsewhere; and to lead them to inquire after the proper means of cleansing, and so to the fountain of Christ's blood, which only cleanses from all sin.

**Ver. 9.** *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep*, etc.] Not in a bare external way; not by afflicting the body with fastings and scourgings, by renting of garments, and clothing with sackcloth, and putting ashes on the head, and other such outward methods of humiliation; but afflicting the soul is meant, an inward mourning and weeping over the plague of the heart, the impurity of nature, and the various sins of life; after a godly sort, and because

contrary to a God of infinite love and grace; in an evangelical way, looking to Jesus, and being affected with the pardoning grace and love of God in Christ.

*Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness;* meaning their carnal joy, on account of their friendship with the world, and their enjoyment of the things of it, since they consumed them on their lusts, and which betrayed enmity to God.

**Ver. 10.** *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,* etc.] Which is done, when men, before the Lord, and from their hearts, and in the sincerity of their souls, acknowledge their meanness and unworthiness, their vileness, sinfulness, and wretchedness, and implore the grace and mercy of God in Christ, as did Abraham, Jacob, Job, Isaiah, Paul, and the publican; and when they walk humbly with God, acknowledging they can do nothing without him; owning their dependence on his grace, and ascribing all they have, and are, unto it:

*and he shall lift you up;* this is God's usual way to lift up the meek, and exalt those that humble themselves; he lifts them from the dunghill, to set them among princes; he gives them a place, and a name in his house, better than sons and daughters; he adorns them with his grace; he clothes them with the righteousness of his Son, he grants them nearness to himself; and at last will introduce them into his kingdom and glory.

**Ver. 11.** *Speak not evil one of another, brethren,* etc.] The apostle here returns to his former subject, concerning the vices of the tongue, he had been upon in the preceding chapter, (<sup>5016</sup>James 3:6-10), and here mentions one, which professors of religion were too much guilty of, and that is, speaking evil one of another; which is done either by raising false reports, and bringing false charges; or by aggravating failings and infirmities; or by lessening and depreciating characters, and endeavouring to bring others into discredit and disesteem among men: this is a very great evil, and what the men of the world do, and from them it is expected; but for the saints to speak evil one of another, to sit and speak against a brother, and slander an own mother's son, is barbarous and unnatural.

*He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law;* he that is a talebearer and backbites his brother, his fellow member, and detracts from his good name and character, and takes upon him to judge his heart, and his state, as well as,

to condemn his actions, he speaks evil of the law; and judges and condemns that, as if that forbid a thing that was lawful, even tale bearing and detraction, (<sup>1896</sup>Leviticus 19:16), or by speaking evil of him for a good thing he does, he blames and condemns the law, as though it commanded a thing that was evil; and by passing sentence upon his brother, he takes upon him the province of the law, which is to accuse, charge, convince, pronounce guilty, and condemn:

*but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law*; as is a duty, and would best become:

*but a judge*; and so such a person not only infringes the right of the law, but assumes the place of the Judge and lawgiver himself; whereas, as follows,

**Ver. 12.** *There is one lawgiver*, etc.] The Alexandrian copy, and others, and the Syriac, Ethiopic, and Vulgate Latin versions, add, “and judge”. Who is the one only Lord God, (<sup>1897</sup>Isaiah 33:22). This is a character that may be applied to God the Father, who gave the law to the people of Israel, both the judicial and ceremonial law, and also the moral law; from his right hand went a fiery law, and to him belongs the giving of it; and also to the Son of God, the Lord Jesus who is King of saints, and lawgiver in his house; who has given out commandments to be observed, and laws of discipline for the right ordering of his house, and kingdom, to be regarded; and particularly the new commandment of love, which is eminently called the law of Christ; and which is most apparently broke, by detraction and speaking evil one of another: now there may be inferior and subordinate lawgivers, as Judah is said to be God's lawgiver, and Moses is said to command the Jews a law; yet there is but one supreme, universal, and perfect lawgiver, who is God; and though there may be many lawgivers in things political, whose legislative power is to be obeyed, both for the Lord's sake, and for conscience sake; yet in things religious, and relating to conscience, God is the only lawgiver, who is to be hearkened unto:

*who is able to save*, and to destroy; this is true of God the Father, who is able to save, and does save by his Son Jesus Christ, and even persons that have broken the law he has given, and are liable to the curse and condemnation of it; and he is able to save them according to that law, in perfect consistence with it, and with his justice and holiness, since Christ, by whom he saves, was made under it, and has fulfilled it; and that Christ is mighty to save, able to save to the uttermost, is certain from the Scripture,

and all experience; and God, the lawgiver, is able to destroy both body and soul in hell, for the transgressions of his law; and even Christ the Lamb is also the lion of the tribe of Judah, who will break his enemies in pieces, as a potter's vessel, and punish the contemners of his Gospel with everlasting destruction, from his presence and glory: in a word, God, the lawgiver, is sovereign, and can destroy, or save, whom he pleases; he is able to save the brother that is spoken against, and to destroy him that speaks against him:

*who art thou that judgest another?* another man's servant, as in (Ⓜ14) Romans 14:4) or “thy neighbour”, as the Syriac and Ethiopic versions read; or “the neighbour”, as the Alexandrian copy, and the Vulgate Latin version; that is, any brother, friend, or neighbour, in the manner as before observed in the preceding verse.

**Ver. 13.** *Go to now, ye that say,* etc.] The apostle passes from exposing the sin of detraction, and rash judgment, to inveigh against those of presumption and self-confidence; and the phrase, “go to now”, is a note of transition, as well as of attention, and contains the form of a solemn and grave address to persons, who either think within themselves, or vocally express, the following words, or the like unto them:

*today, or tomorrow, we will go into such a city;* in such a country, a place of great trade and merchandise; as Tyre then was in Phoenicia, Thessalonica in Macedonia, Ephesus in Asia, and others: some render this as an imperative, or as an exhortation, “let us go”, which does not alter the sense.

*And continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain;* as is customary for merchants to do; nor does the apostle design by this to condemn merchandise, and the lawful practice of buying and selling, and getting gain; but that men should not resolve upon those things without consulting God, and attending to his will, and subjecting themselves to it; and without considering the uncertainty and frailty of human life; as well as should not promise and assure themselves of success, of getting gain and riches, as if those things were in their own power, and had no dependence upon the providence and blessing of God.

**Ver. 14.** *Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow,* etc.] Whether there would be a morrow for them or not, whether they should live till tomorrow; and if they should, they knew not what a morrow would bring forth, or what things would happen, which might prevent their intended

journey and success: no man can secure a day, an hour, a moment, and much less a year of continuance in this life; nor can he foresee what will befall him today or tomorrow; therefore it is great stupidity to determine on this, and the other, without the leave of God, in whom he lives, moves, and has his being; and by whose providence all events are governed and directed; (see <sup><470></sup>Proverbs 27:1)

*for what is your life?* of what kind and nature is it? what assurance can be had of the continuance of it? by what may it be expressed? or to what may it be compared?

*it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away;* which rises out of the earth, or water, and expires almost as soon as it exists; at least, continues but a very short time, and is very weak and fleeting, and carried about here and there, and soon returns from whence it came: the allusion is to the breath of man, which is in his nostrils, and who is not to be accounted of, or depended on.

**Ver. 15.** *For that ye ought to say,* etc.] Instead of saying we will go to such and such a place, and do this, and that, and the other thing, it should be said,

*if the Lord will, and we shall live, and do this and that;* the last “and” is left out in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions; and the passage rendered thus, “if the Lord will, and we shall live, we will do this”: so that here are two conditions of doing anything; the one is, if it should be agreeable to the determining will and purpose of God, by which everything in the world comes to pass, and into which the wills of men should be resolved, and resigned; and the other is, if we should live, since life is so very uncertain and precarious: and the sense is, not that this exact form of words should be always used, but what is equivalent to them, or, at least, that there should be always a sense of these things upon the mind; and there should be a view to them in all resolutions, designs, and engagements: and since the words are so short and comprehensive, it might be proper for Christians to use themselves to such a way of speaking; upon all occasions; we find it used by the Apostle Paul frequently, as in (<sup><480></sup>Acts 18:2 <sup><481></sup>1 Corinthians 4:19 <sup><482></sup>Romans 1:10 <sup><483></sup>Hebrews 6:3), and even by Jews, Heathens, and Turks. It is a saying of Ben Syra, the Jew <sup>f39</sup>,

“let a man never say he will do anything, before he says **μὴ ῥησῶμα**, “if God will””

So Cyrus, king of Persia, when, under pretence of hunting, he designed an expedition into Armenia, upon which an hare started, and was caught by an eagle, said to his friends, this will be a good or prosperous hunting to us, **ην ψεος ψελη**, “if God will”<sup>f40</sup>. And very remarkable are the words of Socrates to Alcibiades, inquiring of him how he ought to speak; says Socrates, **εας ψεος εψελη**, “if God will”<sup>f41</sup>; and says he, in another place<sup>f42</sup>,

“but I will do this, and come unto thee tomorrow, “if God will”.”

And it is reported of the Turks<sup>f43</sup>, that they submit everything to the divine will; as the success of war, or a journey, or anything, even of the least moment, they desire to be done; and never promise themselves, or others, anything, but under this condition, “In Shallah”, if God will.

**Ver. 16.** *But now ye rejoice in your boastings*, etc.] Of tomorrow, and of the continuance of life, and of going to such a place, and abiding there for such a time, and of trading and trafficking with great success, to the obtaining of much gain and riches; (see <sup><270></sup>Proverbs 27:1)

*all such rejoicing is evil*; wicked and atheistical, as expressing a neglect of and independence on Providence; arrogating and ascribing too much to themselves, their power and will, as if they had their lives and fortunes in their own hands, and at their own dispose, when all depend upon the will of God. The Syriac version renders it, “all such rejoicing is from evil”; from an evil heart, and from the evil one, Satan.

**Ver. 17.** *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good*, etc.] This may regard not only the last particular of referring all things to the will of God, the sovereign disposer of life, and all events, which some might have the knowledge of in theory, though they did not practise according to it; but all the good things the apostle had exhorted to, and the contrary to which he had warned from, in this epistle; and suggests, that a Gnostic, or one that knows the will of God, in the several branches of it, revealed in his word,

*and doth it not, to him it is sin*: it is a greater sin; it is an aggravated one; it is criminal in him that is ignorant of what is good, and does that which is evil, nor shall he escape punishment; but it is much more wicked in a man that knows what is right and good, and ought to be done, and does it not, but that which is evil, and his condemnation will be greater; (see <sup><2127></sup>Luke 12:47,48). The omission of a known duty, as well as the commission of a known sin, is criminal.



# CHAPTER 5

## INTRODUCTION TO JAMES 5

In this chapter the apostle reprove the vices of rich men, and denounces the judgments of God upon them; exhorts the saints to patience under sufferings; warns them from vain and profane swearing, and presses to various duties and branches of religious worship, private and public, and to the performance of several good offices of love to one another. He represents the miseries of wicked rich men as just at hand, (<sup><SUB></sup>James 5:1) because they made no use of their riches, either for themselves, or others, and because of the trust they put in them, heaping them up against a time to come, (<sup><SUB></sup>James 5:2,3), and because of their injustice in detaining the hire of labourers from them, (<sup><SUB></sup>James 5:4) and because of their wantonness and luxury, (<sup><SUB></sup>James 5:5) and because of their cruelty to the innocent, (<sup><SUB></sup>James 5:6) and such who suffer at their hands are exhorted to exercise patience, from the instance of the husbandman waiting patiently for the fruit of the earth, and the rain to produce it; and from the consideration of the coming of Christ, the Judge, being near at hand, (<sup><SUB></sup>James 5:7-9) and from the example of the prophets of the Lord, who suffered much, and were patient, and so happy; and particularly from the instance of Job, his patience, the end of the Lord in his afflictions, and his pity and compassion towards him, (<sup><SUB></sup>James 5:10,11). But of all things the apostle entreats them, that they would take care of profane swearing, and all vain oaths, since these bring into condemnation, (<sup><SUB></sup>James 5:12) and from hence he passes to various exercises of religion; the afflicted he advises to prayer; and those in comfortable circumstances of body and mind to singing of psalms, (<sup><SUB></sup>James 5:13), and such that are sick, to send for the elders of the church to pray over them, and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord, whereby not only the sick man would be delivered from his sickness, the Lord raising him up, but even his sins would be declared to be forgiven, (<sup><SUB></sup>James 5:14,15). And not only it became the elders to pray for sick persons, but also the saints in general, one for another, and to acknowledge their faults to each other, since the fervent prayer of every righteous man is of great avail with God, (<sup><SUB></sup>James 5:16) of which an instance is given in Elias, whose prayer, though a man subject



to like passions as other men, against, and for rain, was very successful, (<sup><5157></sup>James 5:17,18). And Christians should not only be concerned for the health of each other's bodies, but also for the good of their souls; wherefore, whenever it is observed that any are straying from the path of truth, methods should be taken to restore them, and turn them from the error of their ways; and whoever is the happy instrument of such a restoration is the means of saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins, (<sup><5159></sup>James 5:19,20).

**Ver. 1.** *Go to now, ye rich men*, etc.] All rich men are not here designed; there are some rich men who are good men, and make a good use of their riches, and do not abuse them, as these here are represented; and yet wicked rich men, or those that were the openly profane, are not here intended neither; for the apostle only writes to such who were within the church, and not without, who were professors of religion; and such rich men are addressed here, who, notwithstanding their profession, were not rich towards God, but laid up treasure for themselves, and trusted in their riches, and boasted of the multitude of their wealth; and did not trust in God, and make use of their substance to his glory, and the good of his interest, as they should have done:

*weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you*; meaning, not temporal calamities that should come upon them at the destruction of Jerusalem, in which the rich greatly suffered by the robbers among themselves, as well as by the Roman soldiers; for the apostle is not writing to the Jews in Judea, and at Jerusalem; but to the Christians of the twelve tribes scattered in the several parts of the world, and who were not distressed by that calamity; but eternal miseries, or the torments of hell are intended, which, unless they repented of their sins, would shortly, suddenly, and unavoidably come upon them, when their present joy and laughter would be turned into howling and weeping.

**Ver 2.** *Your riches are corrupted*, etc.] Either through disuse of them; and so the phrase is expressive of their tenaciousness, withholding that from themselves and others which is meet, and which is keeping riches for the owners thereof, to their hurt; or these are corrupted, and are corruptible things, fading and perishing, and will stand in no stead in the day of wrath, and therefore it is great weakness to put any trust and confidence in them:


*and your garments are moth eaten*; being neither wore by themselves, nor put upon the backs of others, as they should, but laid up in wardrobes, or

in chests and coffers, and so became the repast of moths, and now good for nothing.

**Ver. 3.** *Your gold and silver is cankered*, etc.] Or grown rusty like iron, by lying long without use; this is not easily and quickly done, but in length of time gold and silver will change, and contract a rustiness; and so this conveys the same idea of hoarding up riches and laying up money, without making use of it in trade, for the support of the poor, and without distributing it to their necessities:

*and the rust of them shall be a witness against you*: at the day of judgment; which will be a proof that they have not been employed to such services, and for such usefulness, for which they were designed and given.

*And shall eat your flesh as it were fire*; that is, a remembrance of this, a sense of it impressed upon them, shall be like fire in their bones; shall distress their minds, gnaw their consciences, and be in them the worm that never dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched:

*ye have heaped treasure together for the last days*; either for many years, as the fool in the Gospel, for the times of old age, the last days of men, for fear they should then want; or for the last days of the world, or of time, as if they thought they should live for ever: the Vulgate Latin version reads, “ye have treasured up wrath for yourselves in the last days”; instead of riches, as they imagined; and that by their covetousness and wickedness, by a wicked disuse of their riches, and an unrighteous detention of them; but this supplement seems to be taken from (  Romans 2:5) though the sense is confirmed by some copies which connect the phrase, “as it were fire”, in the preceding clause, with this, “ye have treasured up as it were fire”; and the Syriac version renders it, “ye have treasured up fire”; the fire of divine wrath; this is the fruit of treasuring up riches in an ill way, and without making a proper use of them.

**Ver. 4.** *Behold the hire of the labourers, which have reaped down your fields*, etc.] The wages agreed for by the day, with the labourers in their fields, particularly their reapers; which one instance serves for many others; and is the rather mentioned, because reaping is a laborious work, and those who are employed in it have nothing to live upon but their hand labour; and especially because they are made use of in cutting down the corn when it is fully ripe, and in great plenty; wherefore, to detain their just wages from

them argues great inhumanity and wickedness; and yet this was what was done by rich men:

*which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth;* unto God for vengeance, as the blood of Abel did; and shows that such an evil, however privately and fraudulently it may be done, will be made public, and is a crying one:

*and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth;* that is, the Lord of hosts; of angels, and of men; of the host of heaven, and of the inhabitants of the earth; of Jews and Gentiles, and of rich and poor; and who has power to vindicate the cause of the latter against their rich oppressors, and will do it; his ears are open to their cries, he takes notice of them, and regards them, and will take vengeance on those that injure them. The reference is to (<sup>(1845)</sup>Deuteronomy 24:15).

**Ver. 5.** *Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth,* etc.] This is said of other rich men; for all that is here said is not to be understood of the same individuals, but some things of one, and some of another; some made no use of their riches, either for themselves, or others; some did make use of them, and employed the poor, and then would not give them their wages; and others lived a voluptuous and luxurious life, indulged themselves in carnal lusts and pleasures, and gratified the senses by eating, drinking, gaming, and so were dead while they lived. The phrase suggests, that their pleasures were but short lived, but for a season, even while they were on earth; and that hereafter they would not live in pleasure:

*and been wanton;* through the abundance and plenty of good things, their delicious way of living, and the swing of pleasures which they took; the allusion is to fatted beasts, which being in good pastures, grow fat and wanton:

*ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter,* when beasts were slain for some extraordinary entertainment, or for the solemn festivals and sacrifices the Jews, when they lived more deliciously than at other times; and then the sense is, that these rich men fared sumptuously every day; every day was a festival with them; they indulged themselves in intemperance; they ate and drank, not merely what was necessary, and satisfying, and cheering to nature, but to excess, and gorged, and filled themselves in an extravagant manner: the Syriac version, instead of “hearts”, reads “bodies” and one copy reads, “your flesh”: and the last phrase may be rendered, as it is in the same version, “as unto”, or “for the

day of slaughter”; and so the Arabic version, “ye have nourished your hearts, as fattened for the day of slaughter”: like beasts that are fattened in order to be killed, so were they preparing and fitting up by their sins for destruction.

**Ver. 6.** *Ye have condemned and killed the just*, etc.] Meaning not Christ, the Just One, as some have thought; whom the Jewish sanhedrim condemned as guilty of death, and got the sentence passed upon him, and him to be crucified by Pontius Pilate, on the day of slaughter, at the time of the passover, as some connect the last clause of the preceding verse with this; since the apostle is not writing to the Jerusalem Jews, nor to unbelievers, but to professors of religion; though he might say they did it, because their nation did it: but rather this is to be understood of the poor saints, who were just, through the imputation of Christ's righteousness to them, and lived soberly, righteously, and godly, and were harmless and inoffensive in their conversation: who were evil spoken of, censured, and judged, and condemned in a rash and uncharitable manner by their brethren; or were drawn to the judgment seats by the rich, who obtained a judicial process against them, and procured a sentence of condemnation to pass upon them unrighteously; and who killed them, by taking away their good names from them, and by withholding from them their supplies of life, the fruit of their own labour, whereby their lives were embittered and made miserable:

*and he doth not resist you*; it being neither in his power, nor in his inclination; but takes it patiently, quietly submits, and makes no opposition: or God does not resist you, as yet; he will do it shortly.

**Ver. 7.** *Be patient therefore, brethren*, etc.] The apostle here addresses himself to the poor who were oppressed by the rich men, and these he calls “brethren” of whom he was not ashamed; when he does not bestow this title upon the rich, though professors of the same religion: these poor brethren he advises to be patient under their sufferings, to bear them with patience,

*unto the coming of the Lord*; not to destroy Jerusalem, but either at death, or at the last, judgment; when he will take vengeance on their oppressors, and deliver them from all their troubles, and put them into the possession of that kingdom, and glory, to which they are called; wherefore, in the mean while, he would have them be quiet and easy, not to murmur against

God, nor seek to take vengeance on men, but leave it to God, to whom it belongs, who will judge his people:

*behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth*; ripe fruit, which arises from the seed he sows in the earth; and which may be called “precious”, because useful both to man and beast; (see <sup>f43</sup>Deuteronomy 33:14-16) and between this, and the sowing of the seed, is a considerable time, during which the husbandman waits; and this may be an instruction in the present case:

*and hath patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain*; the Jews had seldom rains any more than twice a year; the early, or former rain, was shortly after the feast of tabernacles <sup>f44</sup>, in the month Marchesvan, or October, when the seed was sown in the earth; and if it did not rain, they prayed for it, on the third or seventh day of the month <sup>f45</sup>; and the latter rain was in Nisan, or March <sup>f46</sup>, just before harvest; and to this distinction the passage refers.

**Ver. 8.** *Be ye also patient*, etc.] As well as the husbandman, and like him; and wait for the rains and dews of divine grace to fall, and make fruitful, and for the ripe fruit of eternal life; and in the mean while cheerfully and patiently bear all injuries, and oppressions:

*stablish your hearts*; though the state of the saints is stable, they being fixed in the everlasting love of God, in the covenant of grace, in the hands of Christ, and on the rock of ages; yet their hearts are very unstable, and so are their frames, and the exercise of grace in them, and need establishing, which God's work; which is often done by the means of the word and ordinances; and these the saints should make use of, for the establishing of their hearts: the sense may be, take heart, be of good cheer, do not be dismayed, or faint, or sink under your pressures, but be of good courage, pluck up your spirits, lift up your heads: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh; when he will render tribulation to them that trouble them, free them from all their sorrows and afflictions, and enter them into the joy of their Lord; which will be either at death, which was not very far off, or at the last day, which was drawing nearer and nearer, and which with God was near; with whom a thousand years are as one day.

**Ver. 9.** *Grudge not one against another, brethren*, etc.] On account of any happiness, temporal or spiritual, which another enjoys; do not inwardly repine at it; or secretly sigh and groan in an envious manner at it, though

nothing may be said, as the word used signifies; much less complain of, accuse, and condemn one another, or meditate and seek revenge:

*lest ye be condemned*; hereafter, at the bar of Christ, by the Judge of the whole earth, who is privy to the secret murmurings and grumbings, and the envious sighs and groans of men; (see ~~4001~~ Matthew 7:1)

*behold the judge standeth before the door*; there is another that judgeth, who is the Lord, and he is at hand; he is just at the door; a little while and he will come, and not tarry; which may refer not to Christ's coming to destroy Jerusalem, but to his second coming to judgment, which will be quickly; for the Gospel times are the last times; there will be no other age; at the end of this, Christ will come.

**Ver. 10.** *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord*, etc.] Men who have been highly honoured of God, with a gift of prophesying, or foretelling things to come; to whom God revealed his secrets, doing nothing without acquainting them with it; and who were sent forth by him, and prophesied in his name what were made known unto them; and yet, though these were his favourites, they suffered much; as cruel mockings, scourgings, imprisonment, famine, nakedness, and death in various shapes; some being stoned, others sawn asunder, and others killed by the sword; all which they endured with incredible patience. And therefore the apostle proposes them to be taken,

*for an example suffering affliction, and of patience*; their afflictions were many and great, and yet they were very patient under them; and through faith and patience they went through them, and now inherit the promises; and so are a very proper example and pattern for New Testament saints to follow and copy after.

**Ver. 11.** *Behold, we count them happy which endure*, etc.] Affliction, with courage, constancy, and patience, and hold out to the end; for such shall be saved; theirs is the kingdom of heaven; they are happy now, and will be so hereafter: the Spirit of God, and of glory, now rests upon them; and it is an honour done them that they are counted worthy to suffer for Christ; and they will be glorified with him to all eternity; the consideration of which may serve to encourage and increase patience.

*Ye have heard of the patience of Job*; from the account which is given of him, and his patience, in the book that bears his name; how he behaved under every trial, which came one upon the back of another; as the

plundering of his substance, the loss of his children, and of the health of his body; and yet in all this Job sinned not, nor murmured against God, nor charged him foolishly, and was a mirror of patience; and though he afterwards let fall some expressions of impatience, yet he was humbled for them, and brought to repentance: this shows, that as the Apostle James, so the Jews, to whom he writes, believed that there had been really such a man as Job; and that the book which bears his name is an authentic piece of holy Scripture, and contains a narrative of matters of fact; or otherwise this reference to him would have been impertinent. How long Job endured the chastenings of the Lord cannot be said. The Jews<sup>f47</sup> say they continued on him twelve months, which they gather from (~~<800B>~~ Job 7:3).

*And have seen the end of the Lord;* that is, the happy end, or exodus, out of all his troubles; which the Lord gave “to him”, as the Oriental versions add; for he gave him twice as much as he had before, and blessed his latter end more than his beginning, (~~<820>~~ Job 42:10,12). Some understand this of the Lord Jesus Christ, both of his great patience in sufferings, in which he is an example to his people, and they would do well to look to, and consider him; and of the end of his sufferings, his glorious resurrection from the dead, and session at the right hand of God, where he is crowned with glory and honour; but the former sense is best:

*that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy;* as to Job, so to all his people; his paternal relation to them engages his pity towards them; nor does he willingly afflict them; and when he does, he sympathizes with them; he is afflicted with them, and in his pity redeems them; his heart moves towards them, and he earnestly remembers them, and works deliverance for them in his own time and way; and therefore it becomes them to be patient.

**Ver. 12.** *But above all things, my brethren, swear not,* etc.] As impatience should not show itself in secret sighs, groans, murmurings, and repinings, so more especially it should not break forth in rash oaths, or in profane swearing; for of such sort of swearing, and of such oaths, is the apostle to be understood; otherwise an oath is very lawful, when taken in the fear and name of God, and made by the living God, and is used for the confirmation of anything of moment, and in order to put an end to strife; God himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and angels, and good men, are in Scripture sometimes represented as swearing: and that the apostle is so to be understood, appears from the form of swearing prohibited,



*neither by the heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath*; of the like kind; such as are forbidden, and cautioned, and reasoned against by our Lord, in (<sup><415></sup>Matthew 5:34,35,36) to which the apostle manifestly refers; (see Gill on "<sup><415></sup>Matthew 5:34-36").

*But let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay*; that is, whenever there is an occasion for affirming, or denying anything, let it be done nakedly, simply, and absolutely, without any form of oath annexed to it; for whatever addition of that kind is made comes from evil, and tends to it, and is evil:

*lest ye fall into condemnation*; by the Lord; for either false, or rash, or profane swearing; for he will not suffer it to go unpunished; (see <sup><421></sup>Exodus 20:7). Some copies read, "lest ye fall into hypocrisy"; or dissimulation, and get into a habit and custom of lying and deceiving, as common swearers do; and so reads the Arabic version.

**Ver. 13.** *Is any among you afflicted?* etc.] As the people of God generally are; they are commonly a poor, and an afflicted people; at least there are many among them that are so, and many are their afflictions: those whom Christ loves, as he did Lazarus, are not free from sicknesses and diseases; and these are rather signs of love than arguments against it; and when this is the case of any of the saints, what is to be done?

*let him pray*; to God that can save him; in the name of Christ; under the influence of the Spirit; believing in the word of promise. Times of afflictions are proper times for prayer; there is then more especially need of it; and God sometimes lays his afflicting hand upon his people, when they have been negligent of their duty, and he has not heard of them for some time, in order to bring them near to him, to seek his face, pay him a visit, and pour out a prayer before him; (see <sup><420></sup>Psalm 50:15).

*Is any merry?* in good heart and spirit, in a good frame of mind, as well as in prosperous circumstances, in soul, body and estate:

*let him sing psalms*; let him not only be inwardly joyful, as he should be in prosperity, and be thankful to God for his many mercies, temporal and spiritual, he enjoys; but let him express it vocally, and melodiously, by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs: not that these are the only persons that are to sing psalms, or this the only time, any more than that afflicted persons are the only ones that are to pray, or the time of affliction the only time of prayer; but as affliction more especially calls for prayer, so spiritual joy, and rejoicing in prosperous seasons, for singing of psalms:



weeping, and singing of psalms, were thought, by the Jews, inconsistent. Kimchi, on the title of the third psalm, observes, that their Rabbins say, that when David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, he wept; and if he wept, why is this called a psalm? and if a psalm, **hkb hml**, “why did he weep?”

**Ver. 14.** *Is any sick among you?* etc.] Which is often the case; the bodies of the saints, as well as others, are liable to a variety of diseases; they are sick, and sometimes nigh unto death, as Epaphroditus was: and then,

*let him call for the elders of the church;* in allusion to the elders of the congregation of Israel, (<sup><B09H5></sup>Leviticus 4:15). By these may be meant, either the elder members of the church, men of gravity and soundness in the faith, persons of long standing and experience; who have the gift and grace of prayer, and are not only capable of performing that duty, but of giving a word of counsel and advice to the sick. It was a kind of proverbial saying of Aristophanes the grammarian;

“the works of young men, the counsels of middle aged persons, and **εὐχαὶ γεροντων**, “the prayers of ancient men”<sup>f48</sup>.”

or rather officers of churches are meant, particularly pastors, who are so called in Scripture; these should be sent for in times of sickness, as well as physicians; and rather than they, since their prayers may be the means of healing both soul and body: so in former times, the prophets of God were sent to in times of sickness, for advice and assistance. It is a saying of R. Phinehas ben Chama<sup>f49</sup> that

“whoever has a sick person in his house, let him go to a wise man, and he will seek mercy for him.”

And it follows here,

*and let them pray over him;* or for him, for the recovery of his health:

*anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord;* which some think was only done in a common medicinal way, oil being used much in the eastern countries for most disorders; and so these elders used ordinary medicine, as well as prayer: or rather this refers to an extraordinary gift, which some elders had of healing diseases, as sometimes by touching, and by laying on of hands, or by expressing some words, and so by anointing with oil; (see <sup><B09B></sup>Mark 6:13) which extraordinary gifts being now ceased, the rite or

ceremony of anointing with oil ceases in course: however, this passage gives no countenance to the extreme unction of the Papists; that of theirs being attended with many customs and ceremonies, which are not here made mention of; that being used, as is pretended, for the healing of the souls of men, whereas this was used for corporeal healing; that is only performed when life is despaired of, and persons are just going out of the world; whereas this was made use of to restore men to health, and that they might continue longer in it, as follows.

**Ver. 15.** *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick*, etc.] That is, the prayer of the elders, being put up in faith by them, and in which the sick person joins by faith; such a prayer is a means of bringing down from God a blessing on the sick man, and of restoring him to his former health:

*and the Lord shall raise him up*; from his bed of sickness, on which he is laid, and bring him forth to praise his name, and to fear and glorify him.

*And if he have committed sins*; not that it is a question whether he has or not, for no man lives without sin, nor the commission of it; but the sense is, if he has been guilty of any sins, which God in particular has taken notice of, and on account of which he has laid his chastising hand upon him, in order to bring him to a sense of them, and to acknowledge them; which is sometimes the case, though not always, at the same time that his bodily health is restored:

*they shall be forgiven him*; he shall have a discovery, and an application of pardoning grace to him: and indeed the removing the sickness or disease may be called the forgiveness of his sins, which is sometimes the sense of this phrase in Scripture, as in (~~1088~~1 Kings 8:34,36,50).

**Ver. 16.** *Confess your faults one to another*, etc.] Which must be understood of sins committed against one another; which should be acknowledged, and repentance for them declared, in order to mutual forgiveness and reconciliation; and this is necessary at all times, and especially on beds of affliction, and when death and eternity seem near approaching: wherefore this makes nothing for auricular confession, used by the Papists; which is of all sins, whereas this is only of such by which men offend one another; that is made to priests, but this is made by the saints to one another, by the offending party to him that is offended, for reconciliation, whereby a good end is answered; whereas there is none by the other, and very often bad consequences follow.

*And pray for one another, that ye may be healed;* both corporeally and spiritually:

*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* Not any man's prayer; not the prayer of a profane sinner, for God heareth not sinners; nor of hypocrites and formal professors: but of the righteous man, who is justified by the righteousness of Christ, and has the truth of grace in him, and lives soberly and righteously; for a righteous man often designs a good man, a gracious man, one that is sincere and upright, as Job, Joseph of Arimathea, and others; though not without sin, as the person instanced in the following verse shows; "Elias, who was a man of like passions", but a just man, and his prayer was prevalent: and not any prayer of a righteous man is of avail, but that which is "effectual, fervent"; that has power, and energy, and life in it; which is with the Spirit, and with the understanding, with the heart, even with a true heart, and in faith; and which is put up with fervency, and not in a cold, lukewarm, lifeless, formal, and customary way: it is but one word in the original text; and the Vulgate Latin version renders it, "daily"; that prayer which is constant and continual, and without ceasing, and is importunate; this prevails and succeeds, as the parable of the widow and the unjust judge shows. Some translate the word "inspired": the Spirit of God breathes into men the breath of spiritual life, and they live, and being quickened by him, they breathe; and prayer is the breath of the spiritual man, and is no other than the reverberation of the Spirit of God in him; and such prayer cannot fail of success: it may be rendered "inwrought"; true prayer is not what is written in a book, but what is wrought in the heart, by the Spirit of God; who is the enditer of prayer, who impresses the minds of his people with a sense of their wants, and fills their mouths with arguments, and puts strength into them to plead with God, and makes intercession for them according to the will of God; and such prayer is always heard, and regarded by him: this has great power with God; whatever is asked, believing, is received; God can deny nothing prayed for in this manner; it has great power with Christ, as Jacob had over the angel, when he wrestled with him; and as the woman of Canaan, when she importuned him, on account of her daughter, and would have no denial: such prayer has often been of much avail against Satan, who has been dispossessed by it; even the most stubborn kind of devils have been dislodged by fasting and prayer: it has often been the means of preserving kingdoms and nations, when invaded by enemies, as the instances of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah show; and of removing judgments from a

people, as was often done, through the prayers of Moses, as when fire and fiery serpents were sent among them; and of bringing down blessings as rain from heaven by Elijah; and of delivering particular persons from trouble, as Peter was delivered from prison, through the incessant prayer of the church for him: and this power, and efficacy, and prevalence of prayer, does not arise from any intrinsic worth and merit in it, but from the grace of the Spirit, who influences and endites it, directs to it, and assists in it; and from the powerful mediation, precious blood, and efficacious sacrifice of Christ; and from the promise of God and Christ, who have engaged, that whatever is asked according to the will of God, and in the name of Christ, shall be done. The Jews have had formerly a great notion of prayer: the power of prayer, they say <sup>f50</sup>, is strong; and extol it above all other services: they say <sup>f51</sup>, it is better than good works, or than offerings and sacrifices; and particularly, the prayer of righteous men: says R. Eliezar <sup>f52</sup>

“to what is  $\mu\gamma\gamma\delta\chi \text{ I } \zeta \hat{\text{t}} \text{I pt}$ , “prayer of righteous men” like? it is like a shovel: the sense is, that as the shovel turns the corn on the floor, from one place to another, so prayer turns the holy blessed God from wrath to mercy.”

**Ver. 17.** *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are*, etc.] The apostle gives an instance of earnest and fervent prayer, and of the efficacy of it in Elias; who is the same with the prophet Elijah, or Elijah the Tishbite; who, by the Septuagint in (<sup>3045</sup>Malachi 4:5) is called Elias, as here, and elsewhere, in the New Testament: of him James says, that he was a “man”, contrary to the notion of some of the Jewish writers, who affirm, that Elijah was not born of a father and mother, but was an angel, who was clothed with the four elements of the world <sup>f53</sup>; but he was not only born, but born in sin, as others are, and was by nature no better than others; and he himself confesses that he was no better than his fathers, (<sup>1194</sup>1 Kings 19:4). And the apostle further observes; concerning him, that he was “subject to like passions as we are”; both in body and soul; he was subject to hunger and weariness, and was fed by ravens, and by the widow of Zarephath, and by an angel; and he was subject to reproach, affliction, and persecution, being charged by Ahab as a troubler of Israel, and persecuted by Jezebel, who sought his life; he was a mortal man, and liable to death, and requested to die, and must have died, had it not been for the wonderful power of God, which translated him, that he should not see death; and he was not free from sinful passions, as impatience, fear, and unbelief, (<sup>1171</sup>1

Kings 17:20 19:3-5,10,18). And he prayed earnestly; or prayed in prayer; an Hebraism: it is said <sup>f54</sup> of one, that *hytwl x yl x*, “he prayed his prayer”; and of others, that *ytwl x al x*, “they prayed prayers”; though the phrase here seems to design something more than bare praying; a praying, not merely externally, or formally, and with the lip only, but with the Spirit, and with the understanding, and with the heart engaged in it, with inwrought prayer. The prophet prayed with much earnestness, with great vehemence and intenseness of Spirit, as this Hebraism denotes; his prayer was fervent, and it was constant, and importunate, and was continued till he had an answer: he may be thought to have prayed each of the seven times he sent his servant to look out for a sign of rain, (<sup><118B></sup>1 Kings 18:43), he first prayed,

*that it might not rain*; this is not recorded in express words, but may be gathered from (<sup><1170B></sup>1 Kings 17:1) where he says, “as the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew, nor rain, these years, but according to my word”; so the passage is understood by the Jewish interpreters: the phrase, “before whom I stand”, is paraphrased by one of them <sup>f55</sup> thus; before whom I am used to stand, *hl yptb*, “in prayer”; and it is a common saying with the Jews, there is no standing ever mentioned, but prayer is intended; (see Gill on “<sup><406B></sup>Matthew 6:5”) And the other phrase, “according to my word”, is, by another <sup>f56</sup>, interpreted to this sense, that the rain should not descend naturally, according to the custom of the world, but it should descend when Elijah *wyl [ l l pty*, “prayed for it”, and so it was:

*and it rained not on the earth*: on the land of Israel, which is only meant; it rained in other parts of the world, for the drought in those times was not universal: and this was,

*by the space of three years and six months*; which exactly agrees with the words of Christ, (<sup><402B></sup>Luke 4:25) and this was in judgment upon the land of Israel, for the idolatry it was filled with in the times of Ahab: and this instance of prayer is mentioned, not with a view that it should be imitated; we are not to pray for judgments, unless we have a divine order for it, as Elijah had; but to show the efficacy of prayer made according to the will of God.

**Ver. 18.** *And he prayed again*, etc.] (<sup><118D></sup>1 Kings 18:42,43). Here also is no express mention of his prayer, but it may be concluded from his gestures;

and so the Jewish interpreters understand these words, “Elijah went up to the top of Carmel”, **l l pthl**, “to pray, and he cast himself down upon the earth”, **μymçgh l [ l l pthl**, “to pray for rain; and he put his face between his knees”, **l l pthw**, “and prayed, and said to his servant, go up now, look toward the sea”; and this he said while he was **wtl yptb**, “in his prayers”<sup>f57</sup>: and the effect of this his prayer was,

*and the heaven gave rain*; (see <sup><1185></sup>1 Kings 18:45).

*And the earth brought forth her fruit*: which for the years past it had not; hence there was a sore famine in the land, (<sup><1182></sup>1 Kings 18:2). Now the apostle chose to give this example, because it was a common thing for the Jews to ask for rain: we often read of such a doctor, that he prayed for rain, and it came; and of another, that he asked for the rains, and they descended<sup>f58</sup>: and his view is to observe, that the weakness and infirmities of the saints ought not to discourage them from prayer; and that they should be earnest and fervent in it, as was Elias, a man of like passions with themselves.

**Ver. 19.** *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth*, etc.] Either from Christ, who is the truth, by departing from him, forsaking his ways, worship, and ordinances; or from the Scriptures of truth, not speaking according to them, and embracing notions that are contrary unto them; or from the Gospel, the word of truth, from the doctrine of faith, and from uprightness of life and conversation, after having made a profession of Christianity; for this is to be understood of one who has embraced the Christian religion, become a member of a church, and has walked in the path of truth and holiness, but now fallen into error, either in principle, or in practice, or both:

*and one convert him*; or turn him from his error, to truth again; for this designs not first conversion, or the turning of a sinner from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, and from the evil of a man's heart and ways and from a dependence on his own righteousness, to the Lord Jesus Christ, to look to him for righteousness, life, and salvation, which is wholly and entirely God's work, and not man's; but conversion after backslidings; for a restoration from a fallen condition is sometimes so called, (<sup><450></sup>Psalm 51:1,2,13 <sup><422></sup>Luke 22:32) and which one brother may be an instrument of to another, by showing him, and setting before him, the evil of his errors, whether in principle or practice; and by instructing him in

the doctrines of the Gospel, and in the duties of religion; and by reproofing him in meekness, and according to the rules of Christ; which means are sometimes blessed for the gaining of such; and which may be called conversion: and also, this is sometimes done by praying for him; and which seems chiefly to be intended here; for from praying for the healing of the diseases of the body, the apostle proceeds to encourage the saints to pray for one another, for the healing of the diseases of the mind; and suggests, that if prayer avails to the one, it may to the other; and which is the most desirable, and the greatest blessing, as follows.

**Ver. 20.** *Let him know*, etc.] And observe it for his encouragement:

*that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way*; who is the instrument of restoring a backsliding professor, for such an one is meant by a sinner, and not a profane person; or of turning a poor bewildered believer, who is got out of the way of truth and holiness, into the right way again; or of convincing him of the error of his way, whether it be in point of doctrine, or of duty; and so of bringing him to the fold of Christ again, from whence he has strayed:

*shall save a soul from death*; not efficiently, but instrumentally, as in (<sup>5016</sup>1 Timothy 4:16) for otherwise Christ is the only Saviour; and he will be the means of saving “a soul”, which is of more worth than a world; and that from death, the second death which lies in the separation of the soul from God, and in a sense of his wrath; which apostasy threatens with, and leads unto, if grace prevents not. The Alexandrian copy and others, and the Vulgate Latin version read, “his soul”; but the common reading is more emphatic; the Syriac and Arabic versions render it, “his own soul”; and the Ethiopic version, “himself”, as respecting him that is the instrument of the conversion of the other, and not the person converted:

*and shall hide a multitude of sins*; either “his own”, as the same versions read; and then the sense is, he shall be blessed with a discovery and application of the forgiveness of all his sins, though they have been many and great; or rather the sins of the person converted. Sin is only covered by the blood and righteousness of Christ; and thereby it is so covered, as not to be seen by the eye of vindictive justice and in such manner as that the persons of those who are covered therewith are all fair, without fault and unrepensible in the sight of God; and though their sins are many, even a multitude, they are blotted out as a thick cloud, and are abundantly pardoned; yea, all their sins are covered, be they ever so many, for God

forgives all trespasses, for Christ's sake; and the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin, and his righteousness justifies from all: and whoever is an instrument of bringing a backslider to a sense of the evil of his ways, and to true repentance for the same; as he, upon such repentance, has his iniquities caused to pass from him, or, in other words, to be covered, as from the sight of God, so from his own; he may be said to be the instrument of this also.



# FOOTNOTES

**Ft1** -- Ecclesiastes Hist. 50:2. c. 23.

**Ft2** -- Ib. & 50:3. c. 25.

**Ft3** -- Adv. Haeres. 50:5. c. 1.

**Ft4** -- Adv. Judaeos, c. 2.

**Ft5** -- Homil. 7. in Josuam, fol. 156. E.

**Ft6** -- T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 110. 2.

**Ft7** -- T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 8. 1.

**Ft8** -- Shemot. Rabba, sect. 34. fol. 133. 3.

**Ft9** -- Midrash Haneelam in Zohar in Genesis fol. 67. 4.

**Ft10** -- Tzeror Hammor, fol. 23. 2, 3.

**Ft11** -- Gloss. in T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 21. 1.

**Ft12** -- Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. 50:2. c. 25.

**Ft13** -- Pirke Abot, c. 1. sect. 15. 17. & 3. 13. T. Bab. Megilla. fol. 18. 1.  
Vajikra Rabba, sect. 16. fol. 158. 3. Midrash Kohelet, fol. 71. 1.

**Ft14** -- Philo Zuis Rer. Divin. Haeres. p. 482. Vid. T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 7. 1.

**Ft15** -- Pirke Abot, c. 1. sect. 17.

**Ft16** -- Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. 50:2. c. 29.

**Ft17** -- Isidor. Hispal. Originum, 50:19. c. 32. p. 171.

**Ft18** -- Maimon. Hilchot Sanhedrin, c. 21. sect. 2.

**Ft19** -- Maimon. ib. sect. 3. vid. T. Bab. Shebuot, fol. 30. 1.

**Ft20** -- T. Bab. Gittin, fol. 30. 1. & Bava Bathra, fol. 10. 2.

**Ft21** -- Pirke Abot, c. 4. sect. 13. & Abot R. Nathan, c. 41. T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 28. 2. Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 4. fol. 183. 2. & sect. 14. fol.

215. 2. & Midrash Kohelet, fol. 73. 4. Targum Jon in <sup>(1634b)</sup>Deuteronomy 34:5.

**Ft22** -- Vid. Targum. Jon. & Jerus. in <sup>(12325)</sup>Exodus 32:25. & 33:4.

**Ft23** -- T. Bab. Erubin, fol. 69. 1.

**Ft24** -- Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 9. fol. 192. 3. Zohar in Exodus fol. 20. 2. & 37. 1. & in Leviticus fol. 32. 3. Shemot Rabba, sect. 25. fol. 109. 3. T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 39. 2. & Menachot, fol. 43. 2. & Abkath Rochel, par. 1. p. 3.

**Ft25** -- Zeno & Chrysippus apud Laert. Vit. Zeno, p. 510.

**Ft26** -- Medulla Theolog. 50:2. c. 7. sect. 35.

**Ft27** -- Koran, Sura 4:125.

**Ft28** -- Ohel. Moed, fol. 15. 1.

**Ft29** -- Chambers's Cyclopedia, in the word "Helm".

**Ft30** -- lb. in the word "Rudder".

**Ft31** -- Quaest. Mechanic. c. 5.

**Ft32** -- T. Bab. Erachin, fol. 15. 2. Tzeror Hammor, fol. 100. 1.

**Ft33** -- Otiot R. Aquiba in Ketoreth Hassammim in Genesis fol. 12. 4.

**Ft34** -- T. Bab. Erachin, fol. 15. 2. Yalkut, par. 2. fol. 127. 2.

**Ft35** -- Nat. Hist. 50:8. c. 9. 16, 17. & 10. 5, 44.

**Ft36** -- Nat. Hist. 50:2. c. 103.

**Ft37** -- Isodor. Hispal. Originum, 50:13. c. 13. p. 115.

**Ft38** -- Zohar in Genesis fol. 119. 2.

**Ft39** -- Sentent. 11.

**Ft40** -- Xenophon. Cyropaed. 50:2. c. 25.

**Ft41** -- Plato in Aleibiade, p. 135.

**Ft42** -- Plato in Laches.

**Ft43** -- Smith de Moribus Turc. p. 74.

- Ft44** -- Bartenora in Misn. Taanith, c. 1. sect. 2.
- Ft45** -- T. Bab. Taanith, fol. 4. 2. & 6. 1. & 10. 1. & Bava Metzia, fol. 28. 1. Maimon. Tephilla, c. 2. sect. 16.
- Ft46** -- Targum, Jarchi, Kimchi, & Miclol Jophi in ~~אמ~~ Joel 2:23. Vajikra Rabba, sect. 35. fol. 175. 3.
- Ft47** -- Seder Olam Rabba, c. 3. p. 9.
- Ft48** -- Apud Harpocratian. Lex. p. 125.
- Ft49** -- T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 116. 1.
- Ft50** -- Zohar in Exodus fol. 100. 1.
- Ft51** -- T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 32. 2.
- Ft52** -- T. Bab. Succa, fol. 14. 1. & Yebamot, fol. 64. 1.
- Ft53** -- Zohar in Genesis fol. 31. 1. & Imre Binah in ib.
- Ft54** -- Ib. in Exodus fol. 4. 2. & in Numbers fol. 79. 2.
- Ft55** -- R. David, Kimchi in loc.
- Ft56** -- Vid. Laniado in loc.
- Ft57** -- Jarchi, Kimchi, Ralbag, & Laniado in loc.
- Ft58** -- T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 28. 1. & Taanith, fol. 19. 1. 23. 1. 24. 2. 25. 2. & Yoma, fol. 53. 2.