

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 ^{f1} 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 ^{f2}, 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^{f3} manifestly refers to it, and so does Tertullian^{f4}; and it is expressly mentioned by Origen^{f5} 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 ^{f6}, 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 saying¹⁷,

“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, (^{<4012>}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 (^{<5012>}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 ^{<400>}Matthew 7:7,8 ^{<414>}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 (^{<913D>}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 ^{<96D>}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 ^{<84>}Job 14:2 ^{<91>}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 (^{<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}

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^{f8} 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 (⁴¹⁵⁰Matthew 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 ⁵⁰¹⁵James 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, (^{<5048>}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, (^{<0132>}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 (^{<1974>}Psalm 7:14) on which Kimchi, a Jewish commentator, has this note;

“he (the psalmist) compares the thoughts of the heart [^]wyrhl , “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^{f9};

“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, (⁻⁰¹⁹⁵Genesis 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 ^{f10}, 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 ^{<4013>}Ephesians 1:13 ^{<4023>}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 ^{<4165>}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 [^][*mçl ryhm*, “swift to hear them”^{f11}: 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^{f12}; 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”^{f13}: and they cry up, as a very excellent precept, “be silent, and hear”; and as containing more than persons are aware of^{f14}:

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, (~~508~~ 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 (^{<2000>}Jeremiah 4:4) which the Targum, in that place, calls ןַכְּבִל [ךר, “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, (^{<2300>}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 ^{<800>}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 (^{<800>}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 ^{<800>}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”^{f15}: 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, (~~5018~~James 1:18,21,22), and this is compared to a glass by the Apostle Paul, (~~4018~~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, (~~6012~~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, (^{<210D>}Isaiah 2:2 42:4) and in the New Testament it is called the law, or doctrine of faith, (^{<81KZ>}Romans 3:27) and this doctrine is perfect, as in (^{<49UE>}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 ^{<216S>}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 ^{<1991>}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 ^{<1950>}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 (^{<1900>}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 (^{<1901>}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.