

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, (~~SO4B~~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, (~~SO4B~~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, (~~SO4B~~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, (~~SO4B~~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, (~~SO4B~~James 4:8) to be humbled, mourn, and weep, instead of joy and laughter, (~~SO4B~~James 4:9) to lie low before the Lord, who will raise such up, (~~SO4B~~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, (~~SO4B~~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, (~~SO4B~~James

4:13-15) and he reproves them for their boastings and joy in them, as evil, (^{<S0416>}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, (^{<S0417>}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 ^{<S0416>}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, (^{<S0414>}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 (^{<0163>}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 (^{<0063>}Genesis 6:3) as some; or from (^{<0216>}Exodus 20:5), as others; or from (^{<0502>}Deuteronomy 7:2,5) or from (^{<0806>}Job 5:6) or from (^{<0210>}Proverbs 21:10) others think he had in view some text in the New Testament; either (^{<0502>}Romans 12:2) or (^{<0517>}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 (^{<0412>}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 ^{<OR65>}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 ^{<RS17>}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 (^{<OR34>}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, (⁵⁰⁸⁶James 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, (¹⁸⁹⁶Leviticus 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, (¹⁸⁹⁷Isaiah 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 (⁴⁵¹⁴Romans 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 ^{<470>}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 (^{<480>}Acts 18:2 ^{<481>}1 Corinthians 4:19 ^{<482>}Romans 1:10 ^{<483>}Hebrews 6:3), and even by Jews, Heathens, and Turks. It is a saying of Ben Syra, the Jew ^{f39},

“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” ^{f40}. 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” ^{f41}; and says he, in another place ^{f42},

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

And it is reported of the Turks ^{f43}, 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 ^{<270>}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 ^{<2127>}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, (^{<5157>}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, (^{<5159>}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 (⁽¹⁸⁴⁵⁾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 ^{f43}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 ^{f44}, 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 ^{f45}; and the latter rain was in Nisan, or March ^{f46}, 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 ~~400~~ 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^{f47} 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 (^{<415>}Matthew 5:34,35,36) to which the apostle manifestly refers; (see Gill on "^{<415>}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 ^{<421>}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 ^{<420>}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, (^{<B09H5>}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 γερωντων**, “the prayers of ancient men”^{f48}.”

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^{f49} 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 ^{<B09B>}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 ^{f50}, is strong; and extol it above all other services: they say ^{f51}, it is better than good works, or than offerings and sacrifices; and particularly, the prayer of righteous men: says R. Eliezar ^{f52}

“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 (³⁰⁴⁵Malachi 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 ^{f53}; 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, (¹¹⁹⁴1 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, (¹¹⁷¹1

Kings 17:20 19:3-5,10,18). And he prayed earnestly; or prayed in prayer; an Hebraism: it is said ^{f54} 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, (^{<118B>}1 Kings 18:43), he first prayed,

that it might not rain; this is not recorded in express words, but may be gathered from (^{<1170B>}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 ^{f55} 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 “^{<406B>}Matthew 6:5”) And the other phrase, “according to my word”, is, by another ^{f56}, 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, (^{<402B>}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.] (^{<118D>}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”^{f57}: and the effect of this his prayer was,

and the heaven gave rain; (see ^{<1185>}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, (^{<1182>}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^{f58}: 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, (^{<450>}Psalm 51:1,2,13 ^{<422>}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 (⁵⁰¹⁶1 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 ^(1634b)Deuteronomy 34:5.

Ft22 -- Vid. Targum. Jon. & Jerus. in ⁽¹²³²⁵⁾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 Cyclopeda, 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 ~~2023~~ 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.