

**COMMENTARIES**  
**ON**  
**THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES**  
**BY JOHN CALVIN**

**TRANSLATED AND EDITED**  
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## **TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE**

THE Dedication to King Edward the Sixth is remarkably interesting, as it refers to the character of Popery at that day, and to its manoeuvres with regard to a General Council. The language is strong, and perhaps rougher than what would be at present used, but still true according to all we gather from history as to the state of things in those days. The main principles of Popery are still the same, and similar are its proceedings, though they may be more disguised, and its spirit is equally intolerant and persecuting. Like Mahomedanism, it is exclusive, and ever injurious to the harmony and peace of society.

The order in which the Epistles are arranged is not the same as in our version. There has not been a uniformity in this respect among the ancients. The reason for the arrangement here adopted was probably this, that the First Epistle of Peter, and the First of John, had, from the beginning, been universally acknowledged as genuine, while the Epistle of James, the Second of Peter, and that of Jude, had not from the first been universally received as canonical, though they were eventually so received. The Second and the Third Epistle of John were evidently not deemed by Calvin as "catholic;" and for this reason, as it seems, he omitted them.

The word “Catholic,” or General, as applied to the Epistles here explained, has been differently understood. Some have thought that they have been thus called, because they contain catholic truths; but other Epistles might, for this reason, be also called catholic. Others have supposed that catholic is synonymous with canonical; but in this case also there is no more reason for applying the word to these Epistles than to any other Epistles. But the more probable opinion is, that they were called Catholic, or General, because they were not written to any particular Church, but to Jewish or to Gentile Christians generally. Moreover, the term was not given them at first, but in subsequent ages.

The most probable *dates* of the *five* Epistles here explained are the following : –

<b>BOOK</b>	<b>DATE</b>
The Epistle of James,	A.D. 61
The First Epistle of Peter,	A.D. 65
The Second Epistle of Peter,	A.D. 65
The Epistle of Jude,	A.D. 66
The First, Epistle of John	A.D. 68

This is the order according to the dates most approved by the learned. There is, for the most part, a unanimity as to the dates of the three first Epistles; but with regard to the Epistle of Jude, and the First Epistle of John, there is not the same agreement. There are many who fix later dates: to Jude, 90, and to John, 91 or 92. But this is a matter of no great consequence.

No doubt can be justly entertained but that JAMES, called the Less, was the author of the Epistle. He was the son of Alphaeus or Cleopas, and of Mary, probably a cousin, not a sister, of Mary the mother of our Lord. Hence he is called our Lord’s brother, (Galatians 1:19;) that is, a near relative, as the Word brother is often taken in Scripture. He took a leading part in the council held at Jerusalem, mentioned in Acts 15; and, according to *Jerome*, he resided there thirty years, and presided over the Church. He was put to death, as *Hegesippus* relates, who flourished in the second century, by a tumultuous mob, excited by Jewish zealots, in the year 62.

The canonicity of James’s Epistle has been a subject of dispute, though almost universally allowed in the present day. The facts respecting it, according to *Basnage*, are these, – During the three first centuries it was not extensively known; in the fourth century its authenticity was by *some* disputed; but in the fifth century it was universally acknowledged as genuine; and it has ever since been so acknowledged, with a very few exceptions. What seems to be a sufficient evidence in its favor is the fact, that it is found

as a part of Holy Scripture in the first Syriac Version, which was made early in the second century.

The occasion of writing the Epistle appears to have been the abuse made of the doctrine of free grace by professing Christians, — a subject referred to also by Paul in Romans vi., and in his other Epistles. Abounding grace is at one time despised and rejected; at another time it is turned into licentiousness: these are evils which have ever prevailed in the Church. The Pharisee is too proud to receive grace; the Antinomian pretends to receive and magnify grace, that he may gratify the inclinations of his sinful nature. It was against the Antinomian that James wrote his Epistle.

According to *Lardner* and *Macknight*, the Epistle was addressed to the whole Jewish nation, at home and abroad, believers and unbelievers; according to *Grotius* and *Wall*, to the Jews dispersed abroad indiscriminately, believing and unbelieving; according to *Michaelis*, to the believing Jews, while the unbelieving were not overlooked; but according to *Beza* and *Scott*, to the scattered Jews who professed the Christian faith. And this last opinion has the strongest reasons and evidence in its favor.

With regard to the *First* Epistle of PETER, there has never been a doubt respecting its genuineness. This Apostle took a prominent part at first in the cause of Christianity, but of his labors after the council at Jerusalem, in the year 49, recorded in Acts 15., we have no account in Scripture. Mention is indeed made, in Galatians 2:11, of his being afterwards at Antioch. It has been justly concluded from the superscription of this Epistle that he exercised his ministry in those parts which are here mentioned.

It was thought by *Beza* and *Grotius* that the Epistle was addressed to converted Jews; but by *Doddridge*, *Macknight*, and *Scott*, to Christians in general, both Jews and Gentiles. The latter opinion is the most probable. The arguments assigned by *Horne*, in his Introduction, in favor of the former opinion, are by no means satisfactory.

With regard to the *Second* Epistle of PETER, doubts have been entertained by some as to its authenticity. It appears that it was not at first so widely known as his First Epistle; and this was probably the reason why there were some during the first three centuries who did not regard it as genuine. But it has been quoted as a part of Scripture by some of the earliest Fathers, and fully acknowledged as authentic by those of the fourth and succeeding centuries.

The *First* Epistle of JOHN has from the beginning been uniformly received as a portion of Divine Revelation. Some difference has existed as to the persons for whom it was especially intended, — a matter of no great importance. Some have supposed it to have been written for the Jewish Christians in Judea; but others, with more probability, for Christians generally, both Jewish and Gentile.

Though there is no name attached to it, yet there has been universal consent from the beginning that John was its author; and indeed the style of it throughout is sufficient to shew that he was the writer of it; for his Gospel and the Book of Revelation are in this respect exactly alike; and it is a style peculiarly his own.

JUDE, or Judas, was, as he says, the brother of James, and therefore the son of Alphaeus or Cleopas. Though he does not call himself an apostle, yet he proved himself to be so by saying that he was the brother of James. He is called, as James was, the brother of our Lord, Matthew 13:55. We have in Scripture no account of his ministry after the day of Pentecost.

His Epistle was not at first universally received as canonical. This is acknowledged by *Origen*, *Eusebius*, and *Jerome*; at the same time, they themselves so regarded it; and *Jerome* says that in his day it was by most received as genuine; and it has been quoted as a part of Scripture by *Clement of Alexandria*, *Tertullian*, *Cyril of Jerusalem*, *Athanasius*, *Ambrose*, and *Augustine*.

That some of the Epistles were not universally received as authentic at first is no matter of wonder, when we consider the scattered condition of the Church, and the scanty means of communication. The fact, that *some* had doubts respecting them does not in the least degree invalidate their genuineness; on the contrary, it has conduced to strengthen the evidence in their favor; for the doubts of some must have occasioned a more minute inquiry as to their authenticity. And it was not long before all the Epistles, about which there had been some doubts, had attained the universal approbation of the Church; and what *Lardner* states is worthy of special attention, — That no writings, received by the primitive Church as genuine, have been since proved to be spurious; and that no writings, regarded by it as spurious, have been since proved to be genuine.

The Editor must mention here, what perhaps he ought to have mentioned before, — that in his translations he has not always retained what is called the historical present tense, which is often used by *Calvin*, according to the practice of Latin and Greek writers, and also of the Prophets and the Evangelists. This mode of writing does not accord with the usage of the present day.

Our translators have not been uniform in this respect either in the New or the Old Testament; for they sometimes departed from the original as to this tense, though, for the most part, they retained it. As, for instance, in John 11:39-40, the historical present is *not* retained in the 39th, while it is retained in the 40th verse. The anomalies as to the tenses often met with, especially in the Psalms, have arisen from overlooking this peculiarity. The future in Hebrew is very often used for the present; and this is the historical present, and ought to be rendered in our language in the past tense.

*J.O.*

*THRUSSLINGTON, Sept.. 29, 1855.*

# DEDICATION

TO HIS MOST SERENE HIGHNESS,  
EDWARD THE SIXTH  
THE KING OF ENGLAND, THE LORD OF IRELAND, AND A MOST CHRISTIAN  
PRINCE,  
JOHN CALVIN.

BEHOLD, I return to you again, most excellent King. For though I did not expect that the Commentaries on Isaiah, which I lately dedicated to your Majesty, were a worthy gift, yet it was offered with my hearty good wishes. I have, therefore, thought of adding the Catholic Epistles, as they are commonly called, as a supplement to make up a full measure, so that both might come to your hands at the same time. And doubtless, since they were written either to Gentiles far distant, or to such as inhabited various countries far asunder, it is nothing new to them to pass over the sea, and to make a long circuit in coming to your Majesty. At the same time I thus as a private individual offer to you, most illustrious King, my labors, that being published under your name, they may profit all....

# THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

## THE ARGUMENT

It appears from the writings of Jerome and Eusebius, that this Epistle was not formerly received by many Churches without opposition. There are also at this day some who do not think it entitled to authority. I, however, am inclined to receive it without controversy, because I see no just cause for rejecting it. For what seems in the second chapter to be inconsistent with the doctrine of free justification, we shall easily explain in its own place. Though he seems more sparing in proclaiming the grace of Christ than it behooved an Apostle to be, it is not surely required of all to handle the same arguments. The writings of Solomon differ much from those of David; while the former was intent on forming the outward man and teaching the precepts of civil life, the latter spoke continually of the spiritual worship of God, peace of conscience, God's mercy and gratuitous promise of salvation. But this diversity should not make us to approve of one, and to condemn the other. Besides, among the evangelists themselves there is so much difference in setting forth the power of Christ, that the other three, compared with John, have hardly sparks of that full brightness which appears so conspicuous in him, and yet we commend them all alike.

It is enough to make men to receive this Epistle, that it contains nothing unworthy of an Apostle of Christ. It is indeed full of instruction on various subjects, the benefit of which extends to every part of the Christian life; for there are here remarkable passages on patience, prayer to God, the excellency and fruit of heavenly truth, humility, holy duties, the restraining of the tongue, the cultivation of peace, the repressing of lusts, the contempt of the world, and the like things, which we shall separately discuss in their own places.

But as to the author, there is somewhat more reason for doubting. It is indeed certain that he was not the Son of Zebedee, for Herod killed him shortly after our Lord's resurrection. The ancients are nearly unanimous in thinking that he was one of the disciples named Oblias and a relative of Christ, who was set over the Church at Jerusalem; and they supposed him to have been the person whom Paul mentioned with Peter and John, who he says were deemed pillars, (Galatians 2:9.) But that one of the disciples was mentioned as one of the three pillars, and thus exalted above the other Apostles, does not seem to me probable. I am therefore rather inclined to the conjecture, that he of whom Paul speaks was the son of Alpheus. I do not yet deny that another was the ruler of the Church at Jerusalem, and one indeed from the college of the disciples; for the Apostles were not tied to any particular place. But whether of the two was the writer of this Epistle, it is not for me to say. That Oblias was actually a man of great authority among the Jews, appears even from this, that as he had been cruelly put

to death by the faction of an ungodly chief-priest, Josephus hesitated not to impute the destruction of the city in part to his death.

# CHAPTER 1

JAMES 1:1-4	
1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.	1 Jacobus, Dei ac Domini Jesu Christi servus, duodecim tribubus quae in dispersione sunt, salutem.
2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;	2 Omne gaudium existimate, fratres mei, quum in tentationes varias incideritis;
3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.	3 Scientes quod probatio fidei vestrae, patientiam operatur
4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.	4 Patientia vero opus perfectum habeat, ut sitis perfecti et integri, in nullo deficientes.

1. *To the twelve tribes.* When the ten tribes were banished, the Assyrian king placed them in different parts. Afterwards, as it usually happens in the revolutions of kingdoms (such as then took place,) it is very probable that they moved here and there in all directions. And the Jews had been scattered almost unto all quarters of the world. He then wrote and exhorted all those whom he could not personally address, because they had been scattered far and wide. But that he speaks not of the grace of Christ and of faith in him, the reason seems to be this, because he addressed those who had already been rightly taught by others; so that they had need, not so much of doctrine, as of the goads of exhortations.

2. *All joy.* The first exhortation is, to bear trials with a cheerful mind. And it was especially necessary at that time to comfort the Jews, almost overwhelmed as they were with troubles. For the very name of the nation was so infamous, that they were hated and despised by all people wherever they went; and their condition as Christians rendered them still more miserable, because they held their own nation as their most inveterate enemies. At the same time, this consolation was not so suited to one time, but that it is always useful to believers, whose life is a constant warfare on earth.



But that we may know more fully what he means, we must doubtless take *temptations* or trials as including all adverse things; and they are so called, because they are the tests of our obedience to God. He bids the faithful, while exercised with these, to rejoice; and that not only when they fall into one temptation, but into many, not only of one kind, but of various kinds. And doubtless, since they serve to mortify our flesh, as the vices of the flesh continually shoot up in us, so they must necessarily be often repeated. Besides, as we labor under diseases, so it is no wonder that different remedies are applied to remove them.

The Lord then afflicts us in various ways, because ambition, avarice, envy, gluttony, intemperance, excessive love of the world, and the innumerable lusts in which we abound, cannot be cured by the same medicine.

When he bids us to *count it all joy*, it is the same as though he had said, that temptations ought to be so deemed as gain, as to be regarded as occasions of joy. He means, in short, that there is nothing in afflictions which ought to disturb our joy. And thus, he not only commands us to bear adversities calmly, and with an even mind, but shews us that this is a reason why the faithful should rejoice when pressed down by them.

It is, indeed, certain, that all the senses of our nature are so formed, that every trial produces in us grief and sorrow; and no one of us can so far divest himself of his nature as not to grieve and be sorrowful whenever he feels any evil. But this does not prevent the children of God to rise, by the guidance of the Spirit, above the sorrow of the flesh. Hence it is, that in the midst of trouble they cease not to rejoice.

**3. *Knowing* this, *that the trying*.** We now see why he called adversities *trials* or temptations, even because they serve to try our faith. And there is here a reason given to confirm the last sentence. For it might, on the other hand, be objected, "How comes it, that we judge that sweet which to the sense is bitter?" He then shews by the effect that we ought to rejoice in afflictions, because they produce fruit that ought to be highly valued, even patience. If God then provides for our salvation, he affords us an occasion of rejoicing. Peter uses a similar argument at the beginning of his first Epistle, "That the trial of your faith, more precious than gold, may be," etc. We certainly dread diseases, and want, and exile, and prison, and reproach, and death, because we regard them as evils; but when we understand that they are turned through God's kindness unto helps and aids to our salvation, it is ingratitude to murmur, and not willingly to submit to be thus paternally dealt with.

Paul says, in Romans 5:3, that we are to glory in tribulations; and James says here, that we are to rejoice. "We glory," says Paul, "in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience." What immediately follows seems contrary to the words of James; for he mentions probation in the third place, as the effect of patience, which is here put first as though it were the cause. But the solution is obvious; the word there has an active,

but here a passive meaning. Probation or trial is said by James to produce patience; for were not God to try us, but leave us free from trouble, there would be no patience, which is no other thing than fortitude of mind in bearing evils. But Paul means, that while by enduring we conquer evils, we experience how much God's help avails in necessities; for then the truth of God is as it were in reality manifested to us. Hence it comes that we dare to entertain more hope as to futurity; for the truth of God, known by experience, is more fully believed by us. Hence Paul teaches that by such a probation, that is, by such an experience of divine grace, hope is produced, not that hope then only begins, but that it increases and is confirmed. But both mean, that tribulation is the means by which patience is produced.

Moreover, the minds of men are not so formed by nature, that affliction of itself produces patience in them. But Paul and Peter regard not so much the nature of men as the providence of God through which it comes, that the faithful learn patience from troubles; for the ungodly are thereby more and more provoked to madness, as the example of Pharaoh proves.

4. *But let patience have her perfect work.* As boldness and courage often appear in us and soon fail, he therefore requires perseverance. "Real patience," he says, "is that which endures to the end." For *work* here means the effort not only to overcome in one contest, but to persevere through life. His perfection may also be referred to the sincerity of the soul, that men ought willingly and not feignedly to submit to God; but as the word *work* is added, I prefer to explain it of constancy. For there are many, as we have said, who shew at first an heroic greatness, and shortly after grow weary and faint. He therefore bids those who would be *perfect* and *entire*, to persevere to the end. But what he means by these two words, he afterwards explains of those who fail not, or become not wearied: for they, who being overcome as to patience, be broken down, must, by degrees, be necessarily weakened, and at length wholly fail.

<b>JAMES 1:5-8</b>	
<p><b>5</b> If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.</p>	<p><b>5</b> Porro si quis autem vestrum destituitur sapientia, postulet a Deo, qui dat omnibus simpliciter, nec exprobrat; et dabitur ei.</p>
<p><b>6</b> But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.</p>	<p><b>6</b> Postulet autem in fide, nihil haesitans; nam qui haesitat similis est fluctui maris, qui a vento agitur et circumfertur.</p>

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.	7 non ergo existimet homo ille quod sit quicquam accepturus a Domino.
8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.	8 Vir duplici animo, instabilis est in omnibus viis suis.

5. *If any of you lack wisdom.* As our reason, and all our feelings are averse to the thought that we can be happy in the midst of evils, he bids us to ask of the Lord to give us wisdom. For *wisdom* here, I confine to the subject of the passage, as though he had said, "If this doctrine is higher than what your minds can reach to, ask of the Lord to illuminate you by his Spirit; for as this consolation alone is sufficient to mitigate all the bitterness of evils, that what is grievous to the flesh is salutary to us; so we must necessarily be overcome with impatience, except we be sustained by this kind of comfort." Since we see that the Lord does not so require from us what is above our strength, but that he is ready to help us, provided we ask, let us, therefore, learn, whenever he commands anything, to ask from him the power to perform it.

Though in this place to be wise is to submit to God in the endurance of evils, under a due conviction that he so orders all things as to promote our salvation; yet the sentence may be generally applied to every branch of right knowledge.

But why does he say *If any one*, as though all of them did not want wisdom. To this I answer, that all are by nature without it; but that some are gifted with the spirit of wisdom, while others are without it. As, then, all had not made such progress as to rejoice in affliction, but few there were to whom this had been given, James, therefore, referred to such cases; and he reminded those who were not as yet fully convinced that by the cross their salvation was promoted by the Lord, that they were to ask to be endowed with wisdom. And yet there is no doubt, but that necessity reminds us all to ask the same thing; for he who has made the greatest progress, is yet far off from the goal. But to ask an increase of wisdom is another thing than to ask for it at first.

When he bids us to *ask of the Lord*, he intimates, that he alone can heal our diseases and relieve our wants.

*That giveth to all men liberally.* By *all*, he means those who ask; for they who seek no remedy for their wants, deserve to pine away in them. However, this universal declaration, by which every one of us is invited to ask, without exception, is very important; hence no man ought to deprive himself of so great a privilege.

To the same purpose is the promise which immediately follows; for as by this command he shews what is the duty of every one, so he affirms that they would not do in vain what he commands; according to what is said by Christ,

*“Knock, and it shall be opened.”*  
(Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9.)

The word *liberally*, or freely, denotes promptitude in giving. So Paul, in Romans 12:8, requires simplicity in deacons. And in 2 Corinthians 8 and 2 Corinthians 9, when speaking of charity or love, he repeats the same word several times. The meaning, then, is, that God is so inclined and ready to give, that he rejects none, or haughtily puts them off, being not like the niggardly and grasping, who either sparingly, as with a closed hand, give but little, or give only a part of what they were about to give, or long debate with themselves whether to give or not.

*And upbraideth not.* This is added, lest any one should fear to come too often to God. Those who are the most liberal among men, when any one asks often to be helped, mention their formal acts of kindness, and thus excuse themselves for the future. Hence, a mortal man, however open-handed he may be, we are ashamed to weary by asking too often. But James reminds us, that there is nothing like this in God; for he is ready ever to add new blessings to former ones, without any end or limitation.

**6. *But let him ask in faith.*** He shews here, first the right way of praying; for as we cannot pray without the word, as it were, leading the way, so we must believe before we pray; for we testify by prayer, that we hope to obtain from God the grace which he has promised. Thus every one who has no faith in the promises, prays dissemblingly. Hence, also, we learn what is true faith; for James, after having bidden us to ask in faith, adds this explanation, *nothing wavering*, or, doubting nothing. Then faith is that which relies on God’s promises, and makes us sure of obtaining what we ask. It hence follows, that it is connected with confidence and certainty as to God’s love towards us. The **διακρίνεσθαι**, which he uses, means properly to inquire into both sides of a question, after the manner of pleaders. He would have us then to be so convinced of what God has once promised, as not to admit a doubt whether he shall be heard or not. He *that wavereth*, or doubteth. By this similitude he strikingly expresses how God punishes the unbelief of those who doubt his promises; for, by their own restlessness, they torment themselves inwardly; for there is never any calmness for our souls, except they recumb on the truth of God. He, at length, concludes, that such are unworthy to receive anything from God.

This is a remarkable passage, fitted to disprove that impious dogma which is counted as an oracle under the whole Papacy, that is, that we ought to pray doubtfully, and with uncertainty as to our success. This principle, then, we hold, that our prayers are not heard by the Lord, except when we have a confidence that we shall obtain. It cannot indeed be otherwise, but that through the infirmity of our flesh we must be tossed by various temptations, which are like engines employed to shake our confidence; so that

no one is found who does not vacillate and tremble according to the feeling of his flesh; but temptations of this kind are at length to be overcome by faith. The case is the same as with a tree, which has struck firm roots; it shakes, indeed, through the blowing of the wind, but is not rooted up; on the contrary, it remains firm in its own place.

8. *A double-minded man*, or, a man of a double mind. This sentence may be read by itself, as he speaks generally of hypocrites. It seems, however, to me to be rather the conclusion of the preceding doctrine; and thus there is an implied contrast between the simplicity or liberality of God, mentioned before, and the double-mindedness of man; for as God gives to us with a stretched out hand, so it behooves us in our turn to open the bosom of our heart. He then says that the unbelieving, who have tortuous recesses, are *unstable*; because they are never firm or fixed, but at one time they swell with the confidence of the flesh, at another they sink into the depth of despair.

<b>JAMES 1:9-11</b>	
<b>9</b> Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:	<b>9</b> Porro gloriatur frater humilis in sublimata sua;
<b>10</b> But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.	<b>10</b> Dives autem in humilitate sua, quia tanquam flos herbae prateribit.
<b>11</b> For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.	<b>11</b> Nam sol exortus est cum aestu, et exarescit herba, et flos ejus cecidit, et decor aspectus ejus perit; sic et dives in suis viis (vel, copiis) marcescet.

9. *Let the brother of low degree*. As Paul, exhorting servants submissively to bear their lot, sets before them this consolation, that they were the free-men of God, having been set free by his grace from the most miserable bondage of Satan, and reminds them, though free, yet to remember that they were the servants of God; so here James in the same manner bids the lowly to glory in this, that they had been adopted by the Lord as his children; and the rich, because they had been brought down into the same condition, the world's vanity having been made evident to them. Thus the first he would have to be content with their humble and low state; and he forbids the rich to be proud. Since it is incomparably the greatest dignity to be introduced into the company of angels, nay,

to be made the associates of Christ, he who estimates this favor of God aright, will regard all other things as worthless. Then neither poverty, nor contempt, nor nakedness, nor famine nor thirst, will make his mind so anxious, but that he will sustain himself with this consolation. "Since the Lord has conferred on me the principal thing, it behooves me patiently to bear the loss of other things, which are inferior."

Behold, how a lowly brother ought to glory in his elevation or exaltation; for if he be accepted of God, he has sufficient consolation in his adoption alone, so as not to grieve unduly for a less prosperous state of life.

**13.** *But the rich, in that he is made low,* or; in his lowness. He has mentioned the particular for the general; for this admonition pertains to all those who excel in honor; or in dignity, or in any other external thing. He bids them to glory in their lowness or littleness, in order to repress the haughtiness of those who are usually inflated with prosperity. But he calls it *lowness*, because the manifested kingdom of God ought to lead us to despise the world, as we know that all the things we previously greatly admired, are either nothing or very little things. For Christ, who is not a teacher except of babes, checks by his doctrine all the haughtiness of the flesh. Lest, then, the vain joy of the world should captivate the rich, they ought to habituate themselves to glory in the casting down of their carnal excellency.

*As the flower of the grass.* Were any one to say that James alludes to the words of Isaiah, I would not much object; but I cannot allow that he quotes the testimony of the Prophet, who speaks not only of the things of this life and the fading character of the world, but of the whole man, both body and soul; but here what is spoken of is the pomp of wealth or of riches. And the meaning is, that glorying in riches is foolish and preposterous, because they pass away in a moment. The philosophers teach the same thing; but the song is sung to the deaf, until the ears are opened by the Lord to hear the truth concerning the eternity of the celestial kingdom. Hence he mentions *brother*; intimating that there is no place for this truth, until we are admitted into the order of God's children.

Though the received reading is ἐν ταῖς πορείαις, yet I agree with Erasmus, and read the last word, πορίαις, without the diphthong "in his riches," or; with his riches; and the latter I prefer.

JAMES 1:12-15	
12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath	12 Beatus vir qui suffert temptationem; quod quum probatus fuerit, accipiet coronam vitae,



promised to them that love him.	quam promisit Deus diligentibus ipsum.
<b>13</b> Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:	<b>13</b> Nemo quum tentatur dicat, A Deo tentor; Deus enim nec tentari malis potest, nec quenquam tentat.
<b>14</b> But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.	<b>14</b> Sed unusquisque tentatur, dum a sua concupiscentia abstrahitur, et inescatur.
<b>15</b> Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.	<b>15</b> Postquam autem concupiscentia conceperit, parit peccatum vero perfectum generat mortem.

**12. *Blessed is the man.*** After having applied consolation, he moderated the sorrow of those who were severely handled in this world, and again humbled the arrogance of the great. He now draws this conclusion, that they are happy who magnanimously endure troubles and other trials, so as to rise above them. The word temptation may indeed be otherwise understood, even for the stings of lusts which annoy the soul within; but which is here commended, as I think, is fortitude of mind in enduring adversities. It is, however, a paradox, that they are not happy to whom all things come according to their wishes, but such as are not overcome with evils.

*For when he is tried.* He gives a reason for the preceding sentence; for the crown follows the contest. If, then, it be our chief happiness to be crowned in the kingdom of God, it follows, that the contests with which the Lord tries us, are aids and helps to our happiness. Thus the argument is from the end or the effect: hence we conclude, that the faithful are harassed by so many evils for this purpose, that their piety and obedience may be made manifest, and that they may be thus at length prepared to receive the crown of life.

But they reason absurdly who hence infer that we by fighting merit the crown; for since God has gratuitously appointed it for us, our fighting only renders us fit to receive it.

He adds, that it is *promised* to those who *love* God. By speaking thus, he means not that the love of man is the cause of obtaining the crown, (for God anticipates us by his

gratuitous love;) but he only intimates that the elect who love him are alone approved by God. He then reminds us that the conquerors of all temptations are those who love God, and that we fail not in courage when we are tried, for no other cause than because the love of the world prevails in us.

**13. *Let no man, when he is tempted.*** Here, no doubt, he speaks of another kind of temptation. It is abundantly evident that the external temptations, hitherto mentioned, are sent to us by God. In this way God tempted Abraham, (Genesis 22:1,) and daily tempts us, that is, he tries us as to what are we by laying before us an occasion by which our hearts are made known. But to draw out what is hid in our hearts is a far different thing from inwardly alluring our hearts by wicked lusts.

He then treats here of inward temptations which are nothing else than the inordinate desires which entice to sin. He justly denies that God is the author of these, because they flow from the corruption of our nature.

This warning is very necessary, for nothing is more common among men than to transfer to another the blame of the evils they commit; and they then especially seem to free themselves, when they ascribe it to God himself. This kind of evasion we constantly imitate, delivered down to us as it is from the first man. For this reason James calls us to confess our own guilt, and not to implicate God, as though he compelled us to sin.

But the whole doctrine of scripture seems to be inconsistent with this passage; for it teaches us that men are blinded by God, are given up to a reprobate mind, and delivered over to filthy and shameful lusts. To this I answer, that probably James was induced to deny that we are tempted by God by this reason, because the ungodly, in order to form an excuse, armed themselves with testimonies of Scripture. But there are two things to be noticed here: when Scripture ascribes blindness or hardness of heart to God, it does not assign to him the beginning of this blindness, nor does it make him the author of sin, so as to ascribe to him the blame: and on these two things only does James dwell.

Scripture asserts that the reprobate are delivered up to depraved lusts; but is it because the Lord depraves or corrupts their hearts? By no means; for their hearts are subjected to depraved lusts, because they are already corrupt and vicious. But since God blinds or hardens, is he not the author or minister of evil? Nay, but in this manner he punishes sins, and renders a just reward to the ungodly, who have refused to be ruled by his Spirit. (Romans 1:6.) It hence follows that the origin of sin is not in God, and no blame can be imputed to him as though he took pleasure in evils. (Genesis 6:6.)

The meaning is, that man in vain evades, who attempts to cast the blame of his vices on God, because every evil proceeds from no other fountain than from the wicked lust of man. And the fact really is, that we are not otherwise led astray, except that every one



has his own inclination as his leader and impeller. But that God tempts no one, he proves by this, because he is not *tempted with evils*. For it is the devil who allures us to sin, and for this reason, because he wholly burns with the mad lust of sinning. But God does not desire what is evil: he is not, therefore, the author of doing evil in us.

**14. *When he is drawn away by his own lust.*** As the inclination and excitement to sin are inward, in vain does the sinner seek an cause from an external impulse. At the same time these two effects of lust ought to be noticed – that it ensnares us by its allurements, and that it does us away; each of which is sufficient to render us guilty.

**15. *Then when lust hath conceived.*** He first calls that *lust* which is not any kind of evil affection or desire, but that which is the fountain of all evil affections; by which, as he shews, are conceived vicious broods, which at length break forth into sins. It seems, however, improper, and not according to the usage of Scripture, to restrict the word *sin* to outward works, as though indeed lust itself were not a sin, and as though corrupt desires, remaining closed up within and suppressed, were not so many sins. But as the use of a word is various, there is nothing unreasonable if it be taken here, as in many other places, for actual sin.

And the Papists ignorantly lay hold on this passage, and seek to prove from it that vicious, yea, filthy, wicked, and the most abominable lusts are not sins, provided there is no assent; for James does not shew when sin begins to be born, so as to be sin, and so accounted by God, but when it breaks forth. For he proceeds gradually and shews that the consummation of sin is eternal death, and that sin arises from depraved desires, and that these depraved desires or affections have their root in lust. It hence follows that men gather fruit in eternal perdition, and fruit which they have procured for themselves.

By perfected sin, therefore, I understand, not any one act of sin perpetrated, but the completed course of sinning. For though death is merited by every sin whatever, yet it is said to be the reward of an ungodly and wicked life. Hence is the dotage of those confuted who conclude from these words, that sin is not mortal until it breaks forth, as they say, into an external act. Nor is this what James treats of; but his object was only this, to teach that there is in us the root of our own destruction.

<b>JAMES 1:16-18</b>	
<b>16</b> Do not err, my beloved brethren.	<b>16</b> Ne erretis, fratres mei dilecti:
<b>17</b> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no	<b>17</b> Omnis donatio bona et omne donum perfectum desursum est, descendens a Patre luminum; apud quem

variableness, neither shadow of turning.	non est transmutatio, aut conversionis obumbratio.
<b>18</b> Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.	<b>18</b> Is sua voluntate genuit nos veritatis, ut essemus primitiae quaedam suaram creaturarum.

**16. *Do not err.*** This is an argument from what is opposite; for as God is the author of all good, it is absurd to suppose him to be the author of evil. To do good is what properly belongs to him, and according to his nature; and from him all good things come to us. Then, whatever evil he does, is not agreeable to his nature. But as it sometimes happens, that he who quits himself well through life, yet in some things fails, he meets this doubt by denying that God is mutable like men. But if God is in all things and always like himself, it hence follows that well-doing is his perpetual work.

This reasoning is far different from that of Plato, who maintained that no calamities are sent on men by God, because he is good; for though it is just that the crimes of men should be punished by God, yet it is not right, with regard to him, to regard among evils that punishment which he justly inflicts. Plato, indeed, was ignorant; but James, leaving to God his right and office of punishing, only removes blame from him. This passage teaches us, that we ought to be so affected by God's innumerable blessings, which we daily receive from his hand, as to think of nothing but of his glory; and that we should abhor whatever comes to our mind, or is suggested by others, which is not compatible with his praise.

God is called the *Father of lights*, as possessing all excellency and the highest dignity. And when he immediately adds, that there is in him *no shadow of turning*, he continues the metaphor; so that we may not measure the brightness of God by the irradiation of the sun which appears to us.

**18. *Of his own will.*** He now brings forward a special proof of the goodness of God which he had mentioned, even that he has regenerated us unto eternal life. This invaluable benefit every one of the faithful feels in himself. Then the goodness of God, when known by experience, ought to remove from them all a contrary opinion respecting him.

When he says that God *of his own will*, or spontaneously, *hath begotten* us, he intimates that he was induced by no other reason, as the will and counsel of God are often set in opposition to the merits of men. What great thing, indeed, would it have been to say that God was not constrained to do this? But he impresses something more, that God

according to his own goodwill hath begotten us, and has been thus a cause to himself. It hence follows that it is natural to God to do good.

But this passage teaches us, that as our election before the foundation of the world was gratuitous, so we are illuminated by the grace of God alone as to the knowledge of the truth, so that our calling corresponds with our election. The Scripture shews that we have been gratuitously adopted by God before we were born. But James expresses here something more, that we obtain the right of adoption, because God does also call us gratuitously. (Ephesians 1:4, 5.) Farther, we hence learn, that it is the peculiar office of God spiritually to regenerate us; for that the same thing is sometimes ascribed to the ministers of the gospel, means no other thing than this, that God acts through them; and it happens indeed through them, but he nevertheless alone doeth the work.

The word *begotten* means that we become new men, so that we put off our former nature when we are effectually called by God. He adds how God begets us, even by the *word of truth*, so that we may know that we cannot enter the kingdom of God by any other door.

*That we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.* The word *τινῶν*, "some," has the meaning of likeness, as though he had said, that we are in a manner firstfruits. But this ought not to be restricted to a few of the faithful; but it belongs to all in common. For as man excels among all creatures, so the Lord elects some from the whole mass and separates them as a holy offering, to himself. It is no common nobility into which God extols his own children. Then justly are they said to be excellent as firstfruits, when God's image is renewed in them.

<b>JAMES 1:19-21</b>	
<b>19</b> Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:	<b>19</b> Itaque, fratres mei dilecti, sit omnis homo celer ad audiendum, tardus autem ad loquendum, tardus ad iram:
<b>20</b> For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.	<b>20</b> Ira enim hominus justitiam Dei non operatur.
<b>21</b> Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word,	<b>21</b> Quapropter deposita omni inmunditie, et redundantia malitiae, cum mansuetudine suscipite insitum

which is able to save your souls.	sermonem qui potest servare animas vestras.
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**19. *Let every man.*** Were this a general sentence, the inference would be farfetched; but as he immediately adds a sentence respecting the word of truth suitable to the last verse, I doubt not but that he accommodates this exhortation peculiarly to the subject in hand. Having then set before us the goodness of God, he shews how it becomes us to be prepared to receive the blessing which he exhibits towards us. And this doctrine is very useful, for spiritual generation is not a work of one moment. Since some remnants of the old man ever abide in us, we must necessarily be through life renewed, until the flesh be abolished; for either our perverseness, or arrogance, or sloth, is a great impediment to God in perfecting in us his work. Hence, when James would have us to be swift to hear, he commends promptitude, as though he had said, "When God so freely and kindly presents himself to you, you also ought to render yourselves teachable, lest your slowness should cause him to desist from speaking."

But inasmuch as we do not calmly hear God speaking to us, when we seem to ourselves to be very wise, but by our haste interrupt him when addressing us, the Apostle requires us to be silent, to be *slow to speak*. And, doubtless, no one can be a true disciple of God, except he hears him in silence. He does not, however, require the silence of the Pythagorean school, so that it should not be right to inquire whenever we desire to learn what is necessary to be known; but he would only have us to correct and restrain our forwardness, that we may not, as it commonly happens, unseasonably interrupt God, and that as long as he opens his sacred mouth, we may open to him our hearts and our ears, and not prevent him to speak.

*Slow to wrath.* Wrath also, I think, is condemned with regard to the hearing which God demands to be given to him, as though making a tumult it disturbed and impeded him, for God cannot be heard except when the mind is calm and sedate. Hence, he adds, that as long as wrath bears rule there is no place for the righteousness of God. In short, except the heat of contention be banished, we shall never observe towards God that calm silence of which he has just spoken.

**21. *Wherefore lay apart.*** He concludes by saying how the word of life is to be received. And first, indeed, he intimates that it cannot be rightly received except it be implanted, or strike roots in us. For the expression, to receive the implanted word, ought to be thus explained, "to receive it, that it may be really implanted." For he alludes to seed often sown on and ground, and not received into the moist bosom of the earth; or to plants, which being cast on the ground, or laid on dead wood, soon wither. He then requires that it should be a living implanting, by which the word becomes as it were united with our heart.

He at the same time shews the way and manner of this reception, even *with meekness*. By this word he means humility and the readiness of a mind disposed to learn, such as Isaiah describes when he says,

*“On whom does my Spirit rest, except on the humble and meek?”* (Isaiah 57:15.)

Hence it is, that so far profit in the school of God, because hardly one in a hundred renounces the stubbornness of his own spirit, and gently submits to God; but almost all are conceited and refractory. But if we desire to be the living plantation of God, we must subdue our proud hearts and be humble, and labor to become like lambs, so as to suffer ourselves to be ruled and guided by our Shepherd.

But as men are never thus tamed, so as to have a calm and meek heart, except they are purged from depraved affections, so he bids us to *lay aside uncleanness and redundancy of wickedness*. And as James borrowed a comparison from agriculture, it was necessary for him to observe this order, to begin by rooting up noxious weeds. And since he addressed all, we may hence conclude that these are the innate evils of our nature, and that they cleave to us all; yea, since he addresses the faithful, he shews that we are never wholly cleansed from them in this life, but that they are continually sprouting up, and therefore he requires that care should be constantly taken to eradicate them. As the word of God is especially a holy thing; to be fitted to receive it, we must put off the filthy things by which we have been polluted.

Under the word *κακία* he comprehends hypocrisy and obstinacy as well as unlawful desires or lusts. Not satisfied with specifying the seat of wickedness as being in the soul of man, he teaches us that so abounding is the wickedness that dwells there, that it overflows, or that it rises up as it were into a heap; and doubtless, whosoever will well examine himself will find that there is within him an immense chaos of evils.

*Which is able to save*. It is a high eulogy on heavenly truth, that we obtain through it a sure salvation; and this is added, that we may learn to seek and love and magnify the word as a treasure that is incomparable. It is then a sharp goad to chastise our idleness, when he says that the word which we are wont to hear so negligently, is the means of our salvation, though for this purpose the power of saving is not ascribed to the word, as if salvation is conveyed by the external sound of the word, or as if the office of saving is taken away from God and transferred elsewhere; for James speaks of the word which by faith penetrates into the hearts of men, and only intimates that God, the author of salvation, conveys it by his Gospel.

#### JAMES 1:22-27

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

22 Estote factores sermones, et non auditores solum, fallentes vos ipsos.

<p><b>23</b> For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:</p>	<p><b>23</b> Nam si quis auditor est sermones, et non factor, hic similis est homini consideranti faciem nativitatis suae in speculo.</p>
<p><b>24</b> For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.</p>	<p><b>24</b> Consideravit enim seipsum, et abiit, et protinus oblitus est qualis sit.</p>
<p><b>25</b> But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.</p>	<p><b>25</b> Qui vero intuitus fuerit in legem perfectam, quae est libertatis, et permanserit, hic non auditor obliviosus, sed factor operis, beatus in opere suo erit.</p>
<p><b>26</b> If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.</p>	<p><b>26</b> Si quis videtur religiosus esse inter vos, nec refraenat linguam suam, sed decipit cor suum, hujus inanus est religio.</p>
<p><b>27</b> Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.</p>	<p><b>27</b> Religio pura et impolluta coram Deo et Patre, haec est, Visitare pupillos et viduas in afflictione ipsorum, immaculatum servare se a mundo.</p>

**22. *Be ye doers of the word.*** The doer here is not the same as in Romans 2:13, who satisfied the law of God and fulfilled it in every part, but the doer is he who from the heart embraces God's word and testifies by his life that he really believes, according to the saying of Christ,

“Blessed are they who hear God's word and keep it,”  
(Luke 11:28;)



for he shews by the fruits what that implanting is, before mentioned. We must further observe, that faith with all its works is included by James, yea, faith especially, as it is the chief work which God requires from us. The import of the whole is, that we ought to labor that the word of the Lord should strike root in us, so that it may afterwards fructify.

**23. *He is like to a man.*** Heavenly doctrine is indeed a mirror in which God presents himself to our view; but so that we may be transformed unto his image, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:18. But here he speaks of the external glance of the eye, not of the vivid and efficacious meditation which penetrates into the heart. It is a striking comparison, by which he briefly intimates, that a doctrine merely heard and not received inwardly into the heart avails nothing, because it soon vanishes away.

**25. *The perfect law of liberty.*** After having spoken of empty speculation, he comes now to that penetrating intuition which transforms us to the image of God. And as he had to do with the Jews, he takes the word *law*, familiarly known to them, as including the whole truth of God.

But why he calls it a *perfect law*, and a law of *liberty*, interpreters have not been able to understand; for they have not perceived that there is here a contrast, which may be gathered from other passages of Scripture. As long as the law is preached by the external voice of man, and not inscribed by the finger and Spirit of God on the heart, it is but a dead letter, and as it were a lifeless thing. It is, then, no wonder that the law is deemed imperfect, and that it is the law of bondage; for as Paul teaches in Galatians 4:24, separated from Christ, it generates to condemn and as the same shews to us in Romans 8:13, it can do nothing but fill us with diffidence and fear. But the Spirit of regeneration, who inscribes it on our inward parts, brings also the grace of adoption. It is, then, the same as though James had said, "The teaching of the law, let it no longer lead you to bondage, but, on the contrary, bring you to liberty; let it no longer be only a schoolmaster, but bring you to perfection: it ought to be received by you with sincere affection, so that you may lead a godly and a holy life."

Moreover, since it is a blessing of the Old Testament that the law of God should reform us, as it appears from Jeremiah 31:35, and other passages, it follows that it cannot be obtained until we come to Christ. And, doubtless, he alone is the end and perfection of the law; and James adds *liberty*, as an inseparable associate, because the Spirit of Christ never regenerates but that he becomes also a witness and an earnest of our divine adoption, so as to free our hearts from fear and trembling.

*And continueth.* This is firmly to persevere in the knowledge of God; and when he adds, *this man shall be blessed in his deed*, or work, he means that blessedness is to be found in doing, not in cold hearing.

26. *Seem to be religious.* He now reproves even in those who boasted that they were doers of the law, a vice under which hypocrites commonly labor, that is, the wantonness of the tongue in detraction. He has before touched on the duty of restraining the tongue, but for a different end; for he then bade silence before God, that we might be more fitted to learn. He speaks now of another thing, that the faithful should not employ their tongue in evil speaking.

It was indeed needful that this vice should be condemned, when the subject was the keeping of the law; for they who have put off the grosser vices, are especially subject to this disease. He who is neither an adulterer, nor a thief, nor a drunkard, but, on the contrary, seems brilliant with some outward shew of sanctity will set himself off by defaming others, and this under the pretense of zeal, but really through the lust of slandering.

The object here, then, was to distinguish between the true worshippers of God and hypocrites, who are so swollen with Pharisaic pride, that they seek praise from the defects of others. *If any one*, he says, *seems to be religious*, that is, who has a show of sanctity, and the meantime flatters himself by speaking evil of others, it is hence evident that he does not truly serve God. For by saying that his religion is vain, he not only intimates that other virtues are marred by the stain of evil-speaking, but that the conclusion is, that the zeal for religion which appears is not sincere.

*But deceiveth his own heart.* I do not approve of the version of Erasmus — “But suffers his heart to err;” for he points out the fountain of that arrogance to which hypocrites are addicted, through which, being blinded by an immoderate love of themselves, they believe themselves to be far better than they really are; and hence, no doubt, is the disease of slandering, because the wallet, as Aesop says in his Apologue, hanging behind, is not seen. Rightly, then, has James, wishing to remove the effect, that is, the lust of evil-speaking, added the cause, even that hypocrites flatter themselves immoderately. For they would be ready to forgive were they in their turn to acknowledge themselves to be in need of forgiveness. Hence the flatteries by which they deceive themselves as to their own vices, make them such supercilious censors of others.

27. *Pure religion.* As he passes by those things which are of the greatest moment in religion, he does not define generally what religion is, but reminds us that religion without the things he mentions is nothing; as when one given to wine and gluttony boasts that he is temperate, and another should object, and say that the temperate man is he who does not indulge in excess as to wine or eating; his object is not to express the whole of what temperance is, but to refer only to one thing, suitable to the subject in hand. For they are in vain religious of whom he speaks, as they are for the most part trifling pretenders.



James then teaches us that religion is not to be estimated by the pomp of ceremonies; but that there are important duties to which the servants of God ought to attend.

To *visit* in necessity is to extend a helping hand to alleviate such as are in distress. And as there are many others whom the Lord bids us to succor, in mentioning widows and orphans, he states a part for the whole. There is then no doubt but that under one particular thing he recommends to us every act of love, as though he had said, "Let him who would be deemed religious, prove himself to be such by self denial and by mercy and benevolence towards his neighbors."

And he says, *before God*, to intimate that it appears in deed otherwise to men, who are led astray by external masks, but that we ought to seek what pleases him. By *God and Father*, we are to understand God who is a father.

# CHAPTER 2

JAMES 2:1-4	
<b>1</b> My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.	<b>1</b> Fratres mei, ne in acceptionibus personarum fidem habeatis Domini Jesu Christi ex opinione, (vel, gloriae.)
<b>2</b> For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;	<b>2</b> Si enim ingressus fuerit in coetum vestrum vir aureos anulos gestans, veste indudus splendida; ingressus autem fuerit et pauper in sordida veste;
<b>3</b> And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:	<b>3</b> Et respexeritis in cum qui vestem fert splendidam, et ei dixeritis, Tu sede hic honeste, et pauperi dixeritis, Tu sta illic, vel, Sede hic sub scabello pedum meorum;
<b>4</b> Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?	<b>4</b> An non dijudicati eestis in vobisipsis, et facti iudices malarum cogitationum?

This reproof seems at first sight to be hard and unreasonable; for it is one of the duties of courtesy, not to be neglected, to honor those who are elevated in the world. Further, if respect of persons be vicious, servants are to be freed from all subjection; for freedom and servitude are deemed by Paul as conditions of life. The same must be thought of magistrates. But the solution of these questions is not difficult, if what James writes is not separated. For he does not simply disapprove of honor being paid to the rich, but

that this, should not be done in a way so as to despise or reproach the poor; and this will appear more clearly, when he proceeds to speak of the rule of love.

Let us therefore remember that the respect of persons here condemned is that by which the rich is so extolled, wrong is done to the poor, which also he shews clearly by the context and surely ambitions is that honor, and full of vanity, which is shewn to the rich to the contempt of the poor. Nor is there a doubt but that ambition reigns and vanity also, when the masks of this world are alone in high esteem. We must remember this truth, that he is to be counted among the heirs of God's kingdom, who disregards the reprobate and honors those who fear God. (Psalm 15:4.)

Here then is the contrary vice condemned, that is, when from respect alone to riches, anyone honors the wicked, and as it has been said, dishonors the good. If then thou shouldst read thus, "He sins who respects the rich," the sentence would be absurd; but if as follows, "He sins who honors the rich alone and despises the poor, and treats him with contempt," it would be a pious and true doctrine.

1. *Have not the faith*, etc., *with respect of persons*. He means that the respect of persons is inconsistent with the faith of Christ, so that they cannot be united together, and rightly so; for we are by faith united into one body, in which Christ holds the primacy. When therefore the pomps of the world become preeminent so as to cover over what Christ is, it is evident that faith hath but little vigor.

In rendering τῆς δόξης, "on account of esteem," (*ex opinione*,) I have followed Erasmus; though the old interpreter cannot be blamed, who has rendered it "glory," for the word means both; and it may be fitly applied to Christ, and that according to the drift of the passage. For so great is the brightness of Christ, that it easily extinguishes all the glories of the world, if indeed it irradiates our eyes. It hence follows, that Christ is little esteemed by us, when the admiration of worldly glory lays hold on us. But the other exposition is also very suitable, for when the esteem or value of riches or of honors dazzles our eyes, the truth is suppressed, which ought alone to prevail. To *sit becomingly* means to sit honorably.

4. *Are ye not then partial in yourselves?* or, are ye not condemned in yourselves. This may be read affirmatively as well as interrogatively, but the sense would be the same, for he amplifies the fault by this, that they took delight and indulged themselves in so great a wickedness. If it be read interrogatively, the meaning is, "Does not your own conscience hold you convicted, so that you need no other judge?" If the affirmative be preferred, it is the same as though he had said, "This evil also happens, that ye think not that ye sin, nor know that your thoughts are so wicked as they are."

### JAMES 2:5-7

5 Harken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?	5 Audite, fratres mei dilecti, nonne Deus elegit pauperes mundi hujus divites in fide et heredes regni quod promisit iis qui diligunt eum?
6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?	6 Vos autem contemptui habiustis pauperem: nonne divites tyrannidem in vos exercent et iidem trahunt vos ad tribunalia?
7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?	7 Et iidem contumelia afficiunt bonum nomen quod invocatum est super vos?

5. *Harken, my beloved brethren.* He proves now by a two-fold argument, that they acted preposterously, when for the sake of the rich they despised the poor: The first is, that it is unbecoming and disgraceful to cast down those whom God exalts, and to treat reproachfully those whom he honors. As God honors the poor, then every one who repudiates them, reverses the order of God. The other argument is taken from common experience; for since the rich are for the most part vexatious to the good and innocent, it is very unreasonable to render such a reward for the wrongs they do, so that they should be more approved by us than the poor, who aid us more than they wrong us. We shall now see how he proceeds with these two points.

*Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?* Not indeed alone, but he wished to begin with them, that he might beat down the pride of the rich. This is also what Paul says, that God hath chosen, not many noble, not many mighty in the world, but those who are weak, that he might make ashamed such as are strong (1 Corinthians 1:25.) In short, though God pours forth his grace on the rich in common with the poor, yet his will is to prefer these to those, that the mighty might learn not to flatter themselves, and that the ignoble and the obscure might ascribe in what they are to the mercy of God, and that both might be trained up to meekness and humility.

*The rich in faith* are not those who abound in the greatness of faith, but such as God has enriched with the various gifts of his Spirit, which we receive by faith. For, doubtless,

since the Lord deals bountifully with all, every one becomes partaker of his gifts according to the measure of his own faith. If, then, we are empty or needy, that proves the deficiency of our faith; for if we only enlarge the bosom of faith, God is always ready to fill it.

He says, that a kingdom is *promised* to those who love God: not that the promise depends on love; but he reminds us that we are called by God unto the hope of eternal life, on this condition and to this end, that we may love him. Then the end, and not the beginning, is here pointed out.

6. *Do not the rich.* He seems to instigate them to vengeance by bringing forward the unjust rule of the rich, in order that they who were unjustly treated, might render like for like: and yet we are everywhere bid to do good to those who injure us. But the object of James was another; for he only wished to shew that they were without reason or judgment who through ambition honored their executioners, and in the meantime injured their own friends, at least those from whom they never suffered any wrong. For hence appeared more fully their vanity, that they were induced by no acts of kindness: they only admired the rich, because they were rich; nay, they servilely flattered those whom they found, to their own loss, to be unjust and cruel.

There are, indeed, some of the rich who are just, and meek, and hate all unrighteousness; but few of such men are to be found. James, then, mentions what for the most part usually happens, and what daily experience proves true. For as men commonly exercise their power in doing what is wrong, it hence happens, that the more power any one has, the worse he is, and the more unjust towards his neighbors. The more careful then ought the rich to be, lest they should contract any of the contagion which everywhere prevails among those of their own rank.

7. *Worthy*, or good *name*. I doubt not but that he refers here to the name of God and of Christ. And he says, *by, or, on, the which ye are called*; not in prayer, as Scripture is wont sometimes to speak, but by profession; as the name of a father, in Genesis 48:16, is said to be called on his offspring, and in Isaiah 4:1, the name of a husband is called on the wife. It is, then, the same as though he had said, "The good name in which ye glory, or which ye deem it an honor to be called by; but if they proudly calumniate the glory of God, how unworthy are they of being honored by Christians!"

#### JAMES 2:8-11

8 If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well:

8 Si legem quidem regiam perfectis juxta scripturum, Diliges proximum tuum sicut teipsum, benefacitis.

	(Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14.)
<b>9</b> But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.	<b>9</b> Sin personam respicitis, peccatum committis, et redarguimini a lege veluti transgressores. (Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17, 19.)
<b>10</b> For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.	<b>10</b> Quisquis enim totam legem servaverit, offenderit autem in uno, factus est omnium reus.
<b>11</b> For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.	<b>11</b> Nam qui dixit, Ne moecheris, dixit etiam, Ne occidas. Quod si non fueris moechatus, occideris tamen, factus es transgressor legis.

Now follows a plainer declaration; for he expressly points out the cause of the last reproof, for they were officiously attentive to the rich, not from love, but on the contrary, from a vain desire of attaining their favor: And it is in anticipation, by which he obviated an excuse on the other side; for they might have objected and said, that he ought not to be blamed, who humbly submiteth himself to the unworthy. James, indeed, concedes that this is true, but he shews that it was falsely pretended by them, because they shewed this submission of homage, not from love to their neighbors, but from respect of persons.

In the first clause, then, he acknowledges as right and praiseworthy, as the duties of love which we perform towards our neighbors. In the second, he denies that the ambitious respect of persons ought to be deemed as of this kind, for it widely differs from what the law prescribes. And the hinge of this answer turns on the words "neighbor" and "respect of persons," as though he had said, "If you pretend that there is a sort of love in what you do, this may be easily disproved; for God bids us to love our neighbors, and not to shew respect of persons." Besides, this word "neighbor" includes all mankind: he, then, who says, that a very few, according to his own fancy, ought to be honored, and others passed by, does not keep the law of God, but yields to

the depraved desires of his own heart. God expressly commends to us strangers and enemies, and all, even the most contemptible. To this doctrine the respect of persons is wholly contrary. Hence, rightly does James assert, that respect of persons is inconsistent with love.

8. *If ye fulfill the royal law.* The law here I take simply as the rule of life; and to *fulfill*, or perform it, is to keep it with real integrity of heart, and as they say, roundly, (*rotunde*;) and he sets such a keeping in opposition to a partial observance of it. It is said, indeed, to be a *royal law*, as it is the royal way, or road; that is, plain, straight, and level, which, by implication, is set in opposition to sinuous by-paths and windings.

Allusion however is made, as I think, to servile obedience which they rendered to the rich, when they might, by serving in sincerity their neighbors, be not only free men, but live as kings.

When, in the second place, he says, that those who had respect of persons were *convinced*, or reprov'd by the law, the law is taken according to its proper meaning. For since we are bidden by God's command to embrace all mortals, every one who, with a few exceptions, rejects all the rest, breaks the bond of God, and inverts also his order, and is, therefore, rightly called a transgressor of the law.

10. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law.* What alone he means is, that God will not be honored with exceptions, nor will he allow us to cut off from his law what is less pleasing to us. At the first view, this sentence seems hard to some, as though the apostle countenanced the paradox of the Stoics, which makes all sins equal, and as though he asserted that he who offends in one thing ought to be punished equally with him whose whole life has been sinful and wicked. But it is evident from the context that no such thing entered into his mind.

For we must always observe the reason anything is said. He denies that our neighbors are loved when a part only of them is through ambition chosen, and the rest neglected. This he proves, because it is no obedience to God, when it is not rendered equally according to his command. Then as the rule of God is plain and complete or perfect, so we ought to regard completeness; so that none of us should presumptuously separate what he has joined together. Let there be, therefore, a uniformity, if we desire rightly to obey God. As, for instance, were a judge to punish ten thefts, and leave one man unpunished, he would betray the obliquity of his mind, for he would thus shew himself indignant against men rather than against crimes; because what he condemns in one he absolves in another.

We now, then, understand the design of James, that is, that if we cut off from God's law what is less agreeable to us, though in other parts we may be obedient, yet we become guilty of all, because in one particular thing we violate the whole law. And though he

accommodates what is said to the subject in hand, it is yet taken from a general principle, — that God has prescribed to us a rule of life, which it is not lawful for us to mutilate. For it is not said of a part of the law, “This is the way, walk ye in it;” nor does the law promise a reward except to universal obedience.

Foolish, then, are the schoolmen, who deem partial righteousness, as they call it, to be meritorious; for this passage and many others, clearly shew that there is no righteousness except in a perfect obedience to the law.

**11.** *For he that said,* or he who hath said. This is a proof of the former verse; because the Lawgiver is to be considered rather than each particular precept apart. The righteousness of God, as an indivisible body, is contained in the law. Whosoever, then, transgresses one article of the Law, destroys, as far as he can, the righteousness of God. Besides, as in one part, so in every part, God’s will is to try our obedience. Hence a transgressor of the law is every one who offends as to any one of its commandments according to this saying,

“Cursed is he who fulfills not all things.”  
(Deuteronomy 27:26.)

We further see, that the transgressor of the law, and the guilty of all, mean the same according to James.

<b>JAMES 2:12-13</b>	
<b>12</b> So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.	<b>12</b> Sic loquimini, et sic facite, ut per legem libertatis judicandi.
<b>13</b> For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.	<b>13</b> Judicium enim sine misericordia ei qui non praestiterit misericordiam ;et gloriatur misericordia adversus judicium.

**12.** *So speak ye.* Some give this explanation, that as they flattered themselves too much, they are summoned to the right tribunal; for men absolve themselves according to their own notions, because they withdraw themselves from the judgment of the divine law. He then reminds them that all deeds and words are there to be accounted for, because God will judge the world according to his law. As, however, such a declaration might have smitten them with immoderate terror, to correct or mitigate what they might have thought severe, he adds, *the law of liberty.* For we know what Paul says,

“Whosoever are under the law are under a curse.”  
(Galatians 3:10.)



Hence the judgment of the law in itself is condemnation to eternal death; but he means by the word *liberty*, that we are freed from the rigor of the law.

This meaning is not altogether unsuitable, though if one examines more minutely what immediately follows, he will see that James meant another thing; the sense is as though he had said, "Except ye wish to undergo the rigor of the law, ye must be less rigid towards your neighbors; for the law of liberty is the same as the mercy of God, which delivers us from the curse of the law" And so this verse ought to be read with what follows, where he speaks of the duty of bearing with infirmities. And doubtless the whole passage thus reads well: "Since none of us can stand before God, except we be delivered and freed from the strict rigor of the law, we ought so to act, that we may not through too much severity exclude the indulgence or mercy of God, of which we all have need to the last."

**13. *For he shall have judgment.*** This is an application of the last verse to the subject in hand, which confirms altogether the second explanation which I have mentioned: for he shews, that since we stand through God's mercy alone, we ought to shew that to those whom the Lord himself commends to us. It is, indeed, a singular commendation of kindness and benevolence, that God promises that he will be merciful to us, if we be so to our brethren: not that our mercy, how ever great it may be, shewn towards men, merits the mercy of God; but that God would have those whom he has adopted, as he is to them a kind and an indulgent Father, to bear and exhibit his image on the earth, according to the saying of Christ,

*" Be ye merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful."*  
(Matthew 5:7.)

We must notice, on the other hand, that he could denounce nothing on them more severe or more dreadful than the judgment of God. It hence follows, that all they are miserable and lost who flee not to the asylum of pardon.

*And mercy rejoiceth.* As though he had said, "God's mercy alone is that which delivers us from the dread and terror of judgment." he takes *rejoicing* or glorying in the sense of being victorious or triumphant; for the judgment of condemnation is suspended over the whole world, and nothing but mercy can bring relief.

Hard and forced is the explanation of those who regard mercy as put here for the person, for men cannot properly be said to rejoice or glory against the judgment of God; but mercy itself in a manner triumphs, and alone reins when the severity of judgment gives way; though I do not deny but that hence arises confidence in rejoicing, that is, when the faithful know that the wrath of God in a manner yields to mercy, so that being relieved by the latter, they are not overwhelmed by the former.

**JAMES 2:14-17**

<b>14</b> What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?	<b>14</b> Quid prodest, fratres mei, si fidem dicataliquis se habere, opera autem non habeat? nunquid potest fides salvum facere ipsum?
<b>15</b> If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,	<b>15</b> Quod si frater aut soror nudi fuerint, et egentes quotidiano victu,
<b>16</b> And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?	<b>16</b> Dicat autem aliquis vestrum illis, Abite cum pace, calescite et saturamini; non tamen dederitis quae sunt necessaria corpori, quae utilitas?
<b>17</b> Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.	<b>17</b> Sic et fides, si opera non habuerit, mortua est per se.

**14.** *What doth it profit.* He proceeds to commend mercy. And as he had threatened that God would be a severe Judge to us, and at the same time very dreadful, except we be kind and merciful towards our neighbors, and as on the other hand hypocrites objected and said, that faith is sufficient to us, in which the salvation of men consists, he now condemns this vain boasting. The sum, then, of what is said is, that faith without love avails nothing, and that it is therefore wholly dead.

But here a question arises, Can faith be separated from love? It is indeed true that the exposition of this passage has produced that common distinction of the Sophists, between unformed and formed faith; but of such a thing James knew nothing, for it appears from the first words, that he speaks of false profession of faith: for he does not begin thus, "If any one has faith;" but, "If any says that he has faith;" by which he certainly intimates that hypocrites boast of the empty name of faith, which really does not belong to them.

That he calls it then *faith*, is a concession, as the Rhetoricians say; for when we discuss a point, it does no harm, nay, it is sometimes expedient, to concede to an adversary what he demands, for as soon as the thing itself is known, what is conceded may be easily taken away from him. James then, as he was satisfied that it was a false pretext by

which hypocrites covered themselves, was not disposed to raise a dispute about a word or an expression. Let us, however, remember that he does not speak according to the impression of his own mind when he mentions faith, but that on the contrary he disputes against those who made a false pretense as to faith, of which they were wholly destitute.

*Can faith save him?* This is the same as though he had said, that we do not attain salvation by a frigid and bare knowledge of God, which all confess to be most true; for salvation comes to us by faith for this reason, because it joins us to God. And this comes not in any other way than by being united to the body of Christ, so that, living through his Spirit, we are also governed by him. There is no such thing as this in the dead image of faith. There is then no wonder that James denies that salvation is connected with it.

**15. *If a brother,*** or, For if a brother. He takes an example from what was connected with his subject; for he had been exhorting them to exercise the duties of love. If any one, on the contrary, boasted that he was satisfied with faith without works, he compares this shadowy faith to the saying of one who bids a famished man to be filled without supplying him with the food of which he is destitute. As, then, he who sends away a poor man with words, and offers him no help, treats him with mockery, so they who devise for themselves faith without works, and without any of the duties of religion, trifle with God.

**17. *Is dead, being alone.*** He says that faith is dead, being by itself, that is, when destitute of good works. We hence conclude that it is indeed no faith, for when dead, it does not properly retain the name. The Sophists plead this expression and say, that some sort of faith is found by itself; but this frivolous caviling is easily refuted; for it is sufficiently evident that the Apostle reasons from what is impossible, as Paul calls an angel anathema, if he attempted to subvert the gospel. (Galatians 1:8.)

<b>JAMES 2:18-19</b>	
<b>18</b> Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.	<b>18</b> Quin dicat quisquam, Tu fidem habes, et ego opera habeo; ostende mihi fidem tuam sine operibus (alias, ex operibus) tuis, et ego tibi ex operibus meis ostendam fidem meam.
<b>19</b> Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble.	<b>19</b> Tu credis quod Deus unus est, bene facis; et daemones credunt, ac contremiscunt.

18. *Yea, a man may say.* Erasmus introduces here two persons as speakers; one of whom boasts of faith without works, and the other of works without faith; and he thinks that both are at length confuted by the Apostle. But this view seems to me too forced. He thinks it strange, that this should be said by James, *Thou hast faith*, who acknowledges no faith without works. But in this he is much mistaken, that he does not acknowledge an irony in these words. Then ἀλλὰ I take for “nay rather;” and τις for “any one;” for the design of James was to expose the foolish boasting of those who imagined that they had faith when by their life they shewed that they were unbelievers; for he intimates that it would be easy for all the godly who led a holy life to strip hypocrites of that boasting with which they were inflated.

*Shew me.* Though the more received reading is, “by works,” yet the old Latin is more suitable, and the reading is also found in some Greek copies. I therefore hesitated not to adopt it. Then he bids to shew faith without works, and thus reasons from what is impossible, to prove what does not exist. So he speaks ironically. But if any one prefers the other reading, it comes to the same thing, “Shew me by works thy faith;” for since it is not an idle thing, it must necessarily be proved by works. The meaning then is, “Unless thy faith brings forth fruits, I deny that thou hast any faith.”

But it may be asked, whether the outward uprightness of life is a sure evidence of faith? For James says, “*I will shew thee my faith by my works.*” To this I reply, that the unbelieving sometimes excel in specious virtues, and lead an honorable life free from every crime; and hence works apparently excellent may exist apart from faith. Nor indeed does James maintain that every one who seems good possesses faith. This only he means, that faith, without the evidence of good works, is vainly pretended, because fruit ever comes from the living root of a good tree.

19. *Thou believest that there is one God.* From this one sentence it appears evident that the whole dispute is not about faith, but of the common knowledge of God, which can no more connect man with God, than the sight of the sun carry him up to heaven; but it is certain that by faith we come nigh to God. Besides, it would be ridiculous were any one to say, that the devils have faith; and James prefers them in this respect to hypocrites. The devil *trembles*, he says, at the mention of God’s name, because when he acknowledges his own judge he is filled with the fear of him. He then who despises an acknowledged God is much worse.

*Thou doest well*, is put down for the purpose of extenuating, as though he had said, “It is, forsooth! a great thing to sink down below the devils.”

**JAMES 2:20-26**

<b>20</b> But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?	<b>20</b> Vis autem scire, O homo inanis! quod fides absque operibus mortua sit?
<b>21</b> Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?	<b>21</b> Abraham pater noster, nonne ex operibus justificatus est, quum filium suum Isaac super altare?
<b>22</b> Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?	<b>22</b> Vides quod fides cooperata fuerit ejus operibus, et ex operibus fides perfecta fuerit?
<b>23</b> And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.	<b>23</b> Atque implenta fuit scriptura, quae dicit, Credidit Abraham Deo, et imputatum illi fuit in justitiam, et Amicus Deo vacatus est?
<b>24</b> Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.	<b>24</b> Videtis igitur quod ex operibus justificatur homo, et non ex fide solum.
<b>25</b> Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?	<b>25</b> Similiter et Rahab meretrix, nonne ex operibus justificata est, quum excepit nuntios, et alia via ejecit?
<b>26</b> For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.	<b>26</b> Quemadmodum enim corpus sine anima mortuum est, ita et fides sine operibus mortua est.

**20.** *But wilt thou know.* We must understand the state of the question, for the dispute here is not respecting the cause of justification, but only what avails a profession of faith without works, and what opinion we are to form of it. Absurdly then do they act who

strive to prove by this passage that man is justified by works, because James meant no such thing, for the proofs which he subjoins refer to this declaration, that no faith, or only a dead faith, is without works. No one will ever understand what is said, nor judge wisely of words, except he who keeps in view the design of the writer.

**21. *Was not Abraham.*** The Sophists lay hold on the word *justified*, and then they cry out as being victorious, that justification is partly by works. But we ought to seek out a right interpretation according to the general drift of the whole passage. We have already said that James does not speak here of the cause of justification, or of the manner how men obtain righteousness, and this is plain to every one; but that his object was only to shew that good works are always connected with faith; and, therefore, since he declares that Abraham was *justified by works*, he is speaking of the proof he gave of his justification.

When, therefore, the Sophists set up James against Paul, they go astray through the ambiguous meaning of a term. When Paul says that we are justified by faith, he means no other thing than that by faith we are counted righteous before God. But James has quite another thing in view, even to shew that he who professes that he has faith, must prove the reality of his faith by his works. Doubtless James did not mean to teach us here the ground on which our hope of salvation ought to rest; and it is this alone that Paul dwells upon.

That we may not then fall into that false reasoning which has deceived the Sophists, we must take notice of the two fold meaning, of the word *justified*. Paul means by it the gratuitous imputation of righteousness before the tribunal of God; and James, the manifestation of righteousness by the conduct, and that before men, as we may gather from the preceding words, "Shew to me thy faith," etc. In this sense we fully allow that man is justified by works, as when any one says that a man is enriched by the purchase of a large and valuable chest, because his riches, before hid, shut up in a chest, were thus made known.

**22. *By works was faith made perfect.*** By this he again shews, that the question here is not respecting the cause of our salvation, but whether works necessarily accompany faith; for in this sense it is said to have been perfected by works, because it was not idle. It is said to have been perfected by works, not because it received thence its own perfection, but because it was thus proved to be true. For the futile distinction which the Sophists draw from these words, between formed and unformed faith, needs no labored refutation; for the faith of Abram was formed and therefore perfected before he sacrificed his son. And this work was not as it were the finishing, or last work. Formerly things afterwards followed by which Abraham proved the increase of his faith. Hence this was not the perfection of his faith, nor did it then for the first time put on its form. James then understood no other thing, than that the integrity of his faith then appeared, because it brought forth that remarkable fruit of obedience.



**23. *And the Scripture was fulfilled.*** They who seek to prove from this passage of James that the works of Abraham were imputed for righteousness, must necessarily confess that Scripture is perverted by him; for however they may turn and twist, they can never make the effect to be its own cause. The passage is quoted from Moses. (Genesis 15:6.) The imputation of righteousness which Moses mentions, preceded more than thirty years the work by which they would have Abraham to have been justified. Since faith was imputed to Abraham fifteen years before the birth of Isaac, this could not surely have been done through the work of sacrificing him. I consider that all those are bound fast by an indissoluble knot, who imagine that righteousness was imputed to Abraham before God, because he sacrificed his son Isaac, who was not yet born when the Holy Spirit declared that Abraham was justified. It hence necessarily follows that something posterior is pointed out here.

Why then does James say that it was fulfilled? Even because he intended to shew what sort of faith that was which justified Abraham; that is, that it was not idle or evanescent, but rendered him obedient to God, as also we find in Hebrews 11:8. The conclusion, which is immediately added, as it depends on this, has no other meaning. Man is not justified by faith alone, that is, by a bare and empty knowledge of God; he is justified by works, that is, his righteousness is known and proved by its fruits.

**25. *Likewise also was not Rahab.*** It seems strange that he connected together those who were so unlike. Why did he not rather choose some one from so large a number of illustrious fathers, and join him to Abraham? Why did he prefer a harlot to all others? he designedly put together two persons so different in their character, in order more clearly to shew, that no one, whatever may have been his or her condition, nation, or class in society, has ever been counted righteous without good works. He had named the patriarch, by far the most eminent of all; he now includes under the person of a harlot, all those who, being aliens, were joined to the Church. Whosoever, then, seeks to be counted righteous, though he may even be among the lowest, must yet shew that he is such by good works.

James, according to his manner of speaking, declares that Rahab was justified by works; and the Sophists hence conclude that we obtain righteousness by the merits of works. But he deny that the dispute here is concerning the mode of obtaining righteousness. We, indeed, allow that good works are required for righteousness; we only take away from them the power of conferring righteousness, because they cannot stand before the tribunal of God.

# CHAPTER 3

JAMES 3:1-5	
1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.	1 Nolite plures magistri fieri, fratres mei; scientes quod majus iudicium sumpturi sumus.
2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.	2 In multis enim labimur omnes: si quis in sermone non labitur, hic perfectus est vir, ut qui possit fraeno moderari totum etiam corpus.
3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.	3 Ecce equis fraena in ora injicimus, ut obediunt nobis; et totum illorum corpus circumagimus:
4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.	4 Ecce etiam naves, cum tantae sint, et a saevis ventis pulsantur, circumagnuntur a minimo gubernaculo, quocumque affectus dirigentis voluerit:
5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.	5 Ita et lingua pusillum membrum est, et magna jactat.

1. *Be not many masters.* The common and almost universal interpretation of this passage is, that the Apostle discourages the desire for the office of teaching, and for this reason, because it is dangerous, and exposes one to a heavier judgment, in case he transgresses: and they think that he said, *Be not many masters*, because there ought to have been some. But I take masters not to be those who performed a public duty in the Church, but such as took upon them the right of passing judgment upon others: for such reprovers sought to be accounted as masters of morals. And it has a mode of speaking usual



among the Greeks as well as Latins, that they were called masters who superciliously animadverted on others.

And that he forbade them to be many, it was done for this reason, because many everywhere did thrust in themselves; for it is, as it were, an innate disease in mankind to seek reputation by blaming others. And, in this respect, a twofold vice prevails — though few excel in wisdom, yet all intrude indiscriminately into the office of masters; and then few are influenced by a right feeling, for hypocrisy and ambition stimulate them, and not a care for the salvation of their brethren. For it is to be observed, that James does not discourage those brotherly admonitions, which the Spirit so often and so much recommends to us, but that immoderate desire to condemn, which proceeds from ambition and pride, when any one exalts himself against his neighbor, slanders, carps, bites, and malignantly seeks for what he may turn to a sinister purpose: for this is usually done when impertinent censors of this kind insolently boast themselves in the work of exposing the vices of others.

From this outrage and annoyance James recalls us; and he adds a reason, because they who are thus severe towards others shall undergo a heavier judgment: for he imposes a hard law on himself, who tries the words and deeds of others according to the rule of extreme rigor; nor does he deserve pardon, who will pardon none. This truth ought to be carefully observed, that they who are too rigid towards their brethren, provoke against themselves the severity of God.

2. *For in many things we offend all.* This may be taken as having been said by way of concession, as though he had said, “Be it that thou findest what is blamable in thy brethren, for no one is free from sins; but dost thou think that thou art perfect who usest a slanderous and virulent tongue?” But James seems to me to exhort us by this argument to meekness, since we are ourselves also surrounded with many infirmities; for he acts unjustly who denies to others the pardon he needs himself. So also Paul says, when he bids the fallen to be reprovved kindly, and in the spirit of meekness; for he immediately adds,

“considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

(Galatians 6:1.)

For there is nothing which serves more to moderate extreme rigor than the knowledge of our own infirmity.

*If any man offend not in word.* After having said that there is no one who does not sin in many things, he now shews that the disease of evil-speaking is more odious than other sins; for by saying that he who offends not with his tongue is *perfect*, he intimates that the restraining of the tongue is a great virtue, and one of the chief virtues. Hence they act most perversely who curiously examine every fault, even the least, and yet so grossly indulge themselves.

He then indirectly touches here on the hypocrisy of censors, because in examining themselves they omitted the chief thing, and that was of great moment even their evil-speaking; for they who reproved others pretended a zeal for perfect holiness, but they ought to have begun with the tongue, if they wished to be perfect. As they made no account of bridling the tongue, but, on the contrary, did bite and tear others, they exhibited only a fictitious sanctity. It is hence evident that they were the most reprehensible of all, because they neglected a primary virtue. This connection renders the meaning of the Apostle plain to us.

**3. *We put bits in the horses' mouths.*** By these two comparisons he proves that a great part of true perfection is in the tongue, and that it exercises dominion, as he has just said, over the whole life. He compares the tongue, first, to a bridle, and then to a helm of a ship. Though a horse be a ferocious animal, yet he is turned about at the will of its rider, because he is bridled; no less can the tongue serve to govern man. So also with regard to the helm of a ship, which guides a large vessel and surmounts the impetuosity of winds. Though the tongue be a small member, yet it avails much in regulating the life of man.

*And boasteth great things.* The verb *μεγαλαυχεῖν* means to boast one's self, or to vaunt. But James in this passage did not intend to reprove ostentation so much as to show that the tongue is the doer of great things; for in this last clause he applies the previous comparisons to his subject; and vain boasting is not suitable to the bridle and the helm. He then means that the tongue is endued with great power.

I have rendered what Erasmus has translated the *impetuosity*, the *inclination*, of the pilot or guide; for *ὄρμη* means desire. I indeed allow that among the Greeks it designates those lusts which are not subservient to reason. But here James simply speaks of the will of the pilot.

<b>JAMES 3:5-6</b>	
<b>5</b> — Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!	<b>5</b> Ecce exiguus ignis quantam sylvam incendit.
<b>6</b> And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.	<b>6</b> Et lingua ignis est, et mundus iniquitatis: sic inquam lingua constituta est in membris nostris, inquinans totum corpus, inflammans rotam nativitatis, et inflammatur a gehenna.

He now explains the evils which proceed from the neglect of restraining the tongue, in order that we may know that the tongue may do much good or much evil, — that if it be modest and well regulated, it becomes a bridle to the whole life, but that if it be petulant and violent, like a fire it destroys all things.

He represents it as a small or *little fire*, to intimate that this smallness of the tongue will not be a hindrance that its power should not extend far and wide to do harm.

6. By adding that it is *a world of iniquity*, it is the same as though he had called it the sea or the abyss. And he suitably connects the smallness of the tongue with the vastness of the world; according to this meaning, A slender portion of flesh contains in it the whole world of iniquity.

*So is the tongue.* He explains what he meant by the term *world*, even because the contagion of the tongue spreads through every part of life; or rather he shews what he understood by the metaphor *fire*, even that the tongue pollutes the whole man. He however immediately returns to the fire, and says, that the *whole course of nature* is set on fire by the tongue. And he compares human life to a course or a wheel: and *γένεσις*, as before, he takes for nature, (James 1:23.)

The meaning is, that when other vices are corrected by age or by the succession of time, or when at least then do not possess the whole man, the vice of the tongue spreads and prevails over every part of life; except one prefers to take *setting on fire* as signifying a violent impulse, for we call that fervid which is accompanied with violence. And thus Horace speaks of wheels, for he calls chariots in battle fervid, on account of their rapidity. The meaning then would be, that the tongue is like untamed horses; for as these draw violently the chariots, so the tongue hurries a man headlong by its own wantonness.

When he says that it is *set on fire by hell*, it is the same as though he had said, that the outrageousness of the tongue is the flame of the infernal fire. For as heathen poets imagined that the wicked are tormented by the torches of the Furies; so it is true, that Satan by the fans of temptations kindles the fire of all evils in the world: but James means, that fire, sent by Satan, is most easily caught by the tongue, so that it immediately burns; in short, that it is a material fitted for receiving or fostering and increasing the fire of hell.

### JAMES 3:7-12

7 For every kind of  
beasts, and of birds, and  
of serpents, and of things

7 Omnis enim natura  
ferarum et volucrum et  
serpentium et

in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:	marinorum, a natura humana domatur et dimota est:
<b>8</b> But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.	<b>8</b> Linguam vero nullus hominum domare potest, incoercibile malum, plena veneno mortifero.
<b>9</b> Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.	<b>9</b> Per ipsam benedicimus Deum et Patrem; et per ipsam execramur homines ad similitudinem ejus factos.
<b>10</b> Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.	<b>10</b> Ex eodem ore procedit benedictio et maledictio. Non conuenit, fratres mei, haec ita fieri.
<b>11</b> Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?	<b>11</b> An fons ex eodem foramine eicit dulce et amarum?
<b>12</b> Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.	<b>12</b> Non potest, fratres mei, ficus oleas proferre; aut vitis ficus; sic nullus fons salsam et dulcem gignere aquam.

**7. For every kind of beasts.** This is a confirmation of the last clause; for that Satan by the tongue rules most effectively he proves by this – that it can by no means be brought to due order; and he amplifies this by comparisons. For he says that there is no animal so savage or fierce, which is not tamed by the skill of man, – that fishes, which in a manner inhabit another world, – that birds, which are so quick and roving – and that serpents, which are so inimical to mankind, are sometimes tamed. Since then the tongue cannot be restrained, there must be some secret fire of hell hidden in it.

What he says of wild beasts, of serpents, and of other animals, is not to be understood of them all; it is enough that the skill of man should subdue and tame some of the most ferocious of them, and also that serpents are sometimes tamed. He refers to present and

to past time: the present regards power and capacity, and the past, usage or experience. He hence justly concludes that the tongue is full of deadly poison.

Though all these things most suitably refer in the first place to the subject of this passage — that they claim an unreasonable command over others, who labor under a worse vice; yet a universal doctrine may be understood as taught here, — that if we desire to form our life aright, we must especially strive to restrain the tongue, for no part of man does more harm.

**9. *Therewith***, or, by it, *bless we God*. It is a clear instance of its deadly poison, that it can thus through a monstrous levity transform itself; for when it pretends to bless God, it immediately curses him in his own image, even by cursing men. For since God ought to be blessed in all his works, he ought to be so especially as to men, in whom his image and glory peculiarly shine forth. It is then a hypocrisy not to be borne, when man employs the same tongue in blessing God and in cursing men. There can be then no calling on God, and his praises must necessarily cease, when evil-speaking prevails; for it is impious profanation of God's name, which the tongue is virulent towards our brethren and pretends to praise him. That he may therefore rightly praise God, the view of evil speaking as to our neighbor must especially be corrected.

This particular truth ought also to be borne in mind, that severe censors discover their own virulence, which they suddenly vomit forth against their brethren whatever curses they can imagine, after having in sweet strains offered praises to God. Were any one to object and say, that the image of God in human nature has been blotted out by the sin of Adam; we must, indeed, confess that it has been miserably deformed, but in such a way that some of its lineaments still appear. Righteousness and rectitude, and the freedom of choosing what is good, have been lost; but many excellent endowments, by which we excel the brutes, still remain. He, then, who truly worships and honors God, will be afraid to speak slanderously of man.

**11. *Doth a fountain***. He adduces these comparisons in order to shew that a cursing tongue is something monstrous, contrary to all nature, and subverts the order everywhere established by God. For God hath so arranged things which are contrary, that inanimate things ought to deter us from a chaotic mixture, sure as is found in a double tongue.

<b>JAMES 3:13-18</b>	
<b>13</b> Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his	<b>13</b> Quis sapiens et intelligens inter vos? ostendat ex honesta conversatione opera

works with meekness of wisdom.	sua in mansuetudine sapientiae.
<b>14</b> But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.	<b>14</b> Si vero aemulationem amaraem habetis, et contentionem in corde vestro, ne gloriemini, et mentiamini adversus veritatem.
<b>15</b> This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.	<b>15</b> Non est haec sapientia de sursum veniens, sed terrestris, animalis, daemonica.
<b>16</b> For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.	<b>16</b> Ubi enim aemulatio et contentio, ibi perturbatio et omne pravum opus.
<b>17</b> But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.	<b>17</b> Quae autem e sursum est sapientia, primum pura est, deinde pacata, aequa, comis, plena misericordiae et bonorum operum, sine disquisitione, sine simulatione.
<b>18</b> And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.	<b>18</b> Fructus autem justitiae in pace seminatur facientibus pacem.

**13. *Who is a wise man.*** As the lust of slandering arises mostly from pride, and as the false conceit of wisdom for the most part generates pride, he therefore speaks here of wisdom. It is usual with hypocrites to exalt and shew off themselves by criminating all others, as the case was formerly with many of the philosophers, who sought glory for themselves by a bitter abuse of all other orders. Such haughtiness as slanderous men swell with and are blinded by, James checked, by denying that the conceit of wisdom, with which men flatter themselves, has in it anything divine; but, on the contrary, he declares that it proceeds from the devil.

Then the meaning is, that supercilious censors, who largely indulge themselves, and at the same time spare none, seem to themselves to be very wise, but are greatly mistaken; for the Lord teaches his people far otherwise, even to be meek, and to be courteous to others. They, then, are alone wise in the sight of God, who connect this meekness with an honest conversation; for they who are severe and inexorable, though they may excel others in many virtues, do not yet follow the right way of wisdom.

14. *But if ye have bitter envying.* He points out the fruits which proceed from that extreme austerity which is contrary to meekness; for immoderate rigor necessarily begets mischievous emulations, which presently break forth into contentions. It is, indeed, an improper mode of speaking, to place contentions in the heart; but this affects not the meaning; for the object was to shew that the evil disposition of the heart is the fountain of these evils.

He has called *envying*, or emulation, *bitter*; for it prevails not, except when minds are so infected with the poison of malignity, that they turn all things into bitterness.

That we may then really glory that we are the children of God, he bids us to act calmly and meekly towards our brethren; otherwise he declares that we are lying in assuming the Christian name. But it is not without reason that he has added the associate of envying, even *strife*, or contention, for contests and quarrels ever arise from malignity and envy.

15. *This wisdom descendeth not.* As hypocrites with difficulty give way, he sharply checked their haughtiness, denying that to be true wisdom with which they were inflated, while they were extremely morose in searching out the vices of others. Conceding to them, however, the term *wisdom*, he shews by the words he applies to it its true character, and says that it is *earthly, sensual, devilish*, or demoniac, while true wisdom must be heavenly, spiritual, divine; which three things are directly contrary to the three preceding ones. For James takes it as granted, that we are not wise, except when we are illuminated by God from above through his Spirit. However, then, the mind of man may enlarge itself, all its acuteness will be vanity; and not only so, but being at length entangled in the wiles of Satan, it will become wholly delirious.

*Sensual*, or animal, is in opposition to what is spiritual, as in 1 Corinthians 2:14, where Paul says that the sensual or animal man receives not the things of God. And the pride of man could not have been more effectually cast down, than when thus is condemned whatever wisdom he has from himself, without the Spirit of God; nay, when from himself a transition is made to the devil. For it is the same as though he had said, that men, following their own sense, or minds, or feelings, soon became a prey to the delusions of Satan.



16. *For where envying is.* It is an argument from what is contrary; for envying, by which hypocrites are influenced, produces effects contrary to wisdom. For wisdom requires a state of mind that is calm and composed, but envying disturbs it, so that in itself it becomes in a manner tumultuous, and boils up immoderately against others. Some render ἀκαταστασία inconstancy, and sometimes it means this, but as it signifies also sedition and tumult, perturbation seems the most suitable to this passage. For James meant to express something more than levity, even that the malignant and the slanderer does everything confusedly and rashly, as though he were beside himself; and hence he adds, *every evil work.*

17. *But the wisdom which is from above.* He now mentions the effects of celestial wisdom which are wholly contrary to the former effects. He says first that it is *pure*; by which term he excludes hypocrisy and ambition. He, in the second place, calls it *peaceable*, to intimate that it is not contentious. In the third place, he calls it *kind* or humane, that we may know that it is far away from that immoderate austerity which tolerates nothing in our brethren. He also calls it *gentle* or tractable; by which he means that it widely differs from pride and malignity. In the last place, he says that it is *full of mercy*, etc., while hypocrisy is inhuman and inexorable. By *good fruits* he generally refers to all those duties which benevolent men perform towards their brethren; as though he had said, it is full of benevolence. It hence follows, that they lie who glory in their cruel austerity. But though he had sufficiently condemned hypocrisy, when he said that wisdom is *pure* or sincere; he makes it more clear by repeating the same thing at the end. We are hence reminded, that for no other reason are we beyond measure morose or austere, but this, because we too much spare ourselves, and connive at our own vices.

But what he says, *without discerning* (*sine dijudicatione*), seems strange; for the Spirit of God does not take away the difference between good and evil; nor does he render us so senseless as to be so void of judgment as to praise vice, and regard it as virtue. To this I reply, that James here, by *discerning* or distinguishing refers to that overanxious and overscrupulous inquiry, such as is commonly carried on by hypocrites, who too minutely examine the sayings and doings of their brethren, and put on them the worst construction.

18. *And the fruit of righteousness.* This admits of two meanings, — that fruit is sown by the peaceable, which afterwards they gather, — or, that they themselves, though they meekly tolerate many things in their neighbors, do not yet cease to sow righteousness. It is, however, an anticipation of an objection; for they who are carried away to evil speaking by the lust of slandering, have always this excuse, “What! can we then remove evil by our courteousness?” Hence James says, that those who are wise according to God’s will, are so kind, meek, and merciful, as yet not to cover vices nor favor them; but on the contrary in such a way as to strive to correct them, and yet in a peaceable manner, that is, in moderation, so that union is preserved. And thus he testifies that

what he had hitherto said tends in no degree to do away with calm reproofs; but that those who wish to be physicians to heal vices ought not to be executioners. He therefore adds, *by those who make peace*; which ought to be thus explained: they who study peace, are nevertheless careful to sow righteousness; nor are they slothful or negligent in promoting and encouraging good works; but they moderate their zeal with the condiment of peace, while hypocrites throw all things into confusion by a blind and furious violence.

# CHAPTER 4

JAMES 4:1-3	
1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?	1 Unde bella et pugnae inter vos? nonne hinc, ex voluptatibus vestris, quae militant in membris vestris.
2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.	2 Concupiscitis et non habetis; invidetis et aemulamini, et non potestis obtinere; pugnat et belligeramini, non habetis, propterea quod non petitis;
3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.	3 Petit, et non accipitis, quia male petit, ut in voluptates vestras insumatis.

1. *From whence come wars.* As he had spoken of peace, and had reminded them that vices are to be exterminated in such a way as to preserve peace, he now comes to their contentions, by which they created confusion among themselves; and he shews that these arose from their invidious desires and lusts, rather than from a zeal for what was just and right; for if every one observed moderation, they would not have disturbed and annoyed one another. They had their hot conflicts, because their lusts were allowed to prevail unchecked.

It hence appears, that greater peace would have been among them, had every one abstained from doing wrong to others; but the vices which prevailed among them were so many attendants armed to excite contentions. He calls our faculties *members*. He takes *lusts* as designating all illicit and lustful desires or propensities which cannot be satisfied without doing injury to others.

2. *Ye lust, or covet, and have not.* He seems to intimate that the soul of man is insatiable, when he indulges wicked lusts; and truly it is so; for he who suffers his sinful propensities to rule uncontrolled, will know no end to his lust. Were even the world given to him, he would wish other worlds to be created for him. It thus happens, that

men seek torments which exceed the cruelty of all executioners. For that saying of Horace is true:

*The tyrants of Sicily found no torment greater than envy.*

Some copies have *φονεύετε*, “ye kill;” but I doubt not but that we ought to read, *φθονεῖτε*, “ye envy,” as I have rendered it; for the verb, to kill, does in no way suit the context. *Ye fight*: he does not mean those wars and fightings, which men engage in with drawn swords, but the violent contentions which prevailed among them. They derived no benefit from contentions of this kind, for he affirms that they received the punishment of their own wickedness. God, indeed, whom they owned not as the author of blessings, justly disappointed them. For when they contended in ways so unlawful, they sought to be enriched through the favor of Satan rather than through the favor of God. One by fraud, another by violence, one by calumnies, and all by some evil or wicked arts, strove for happiness. They then sought to be happy, but not through God. It was therefore no wonder that they were frustrated in their efforts, since no success can be expected except through the blessings of God alone.

**3. *Ye seek and receive not.*** He goes farther: though they sought, yet they were deservedly denied; because they wished to make God the minister of their own lusts. For they set no bounds to their wishes, as he had commanded; but gave unbridled license to themselves, so as to ask those things of which man, conscious of what is right, ought especially to be ashamed. Pliny somewhere ridicules this impudence, that men so wickedly abuse the ears of God. The less tolerable is such a thing in Christians, who have had the rule of prayer given them by their heavenly Master.

And doubtless there appears to be in us no reverence for God, no fear of him, in short, no regard for him, when we dare to ask of him what even our own conscience does not approve. James meant briefly this, — that our desires ought to be bridled: and the way of bridling them is to subject them to the will of God. And he also teaches us, that what we in moderation wish, we ought to seek from God himself; which if it be done, we shall be preserved from wicked contentions, from fraud and violence, and from doing any injury to others.

JAMES 4:4-6	
4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.	4 Adulteri et adulterae, an nescitis quod amicitia mundi inimicitia Dei est? qui ergo voluerit amicus esse mundi, inimicus Dei constituitur.

5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?	5 An putatis quod frustra dicat scriptura? An ad invidiam concupiscit spiritus qui habitat in nobis?
6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.	6 Quin majorem dat gratiam: —

4. *Ye adulterers*. I connect this verse with the foregoing verses: for he calls them *adulterers*, as I think, metaphorically; for they corrupted themselves with the vanities of this world, and alienated themselves from God; as though he had said, that they had become degenerated, or were become bastards. We know how frequent, in Holy Scripture, is that marriage mentioned which God forms with us. He would have us, then, to be like a chaste virgin, as Paul says, (2 Corinthians 11:2.) This chastity is violated and corrupted by all impure affections towards the world. James, then, does not without reason compare the love of the world to adultery.

They, then, who take his words literally, do not sufficiently observe the context: for he goes on still to speak against the lusts of men, which lead away those entangled with the world from God, as it follows, —

The *friendship of the world*. He calls it the friendship of the world when men surrender themselves to the corruptions of the world, and become slaves to them. For such and so great is the disagreement between the world and God, that as much as any one inclines to the world, so much he alienates himself from God. Hence the Scripture bids us often to renounce the world, if we wish to serve God.

5. *Do ye think*. He seems to adduce from Scripture the next following sentence. Hence interpreters toil much, because none such, at least none exactly alike, is found in Scripture. But nothing hinders the reference to be made to what has been already said, that is, that the friendship of the world is adverse to God. Moreover; it has been rightly said, that this is a truth which occurs everywhere in Scripture. And that he has omitted the pronoun, which would have rendered the sentence clearer, is not to be wondered at, for, as it is evident, he is everywhere very concise.

*The Spirit*, or, Does the Spirit? Some think that the soul of man is meant, and therefore read the sentence affirmatively, and according to this meaning, — that the spirit of man, as it is malignant, is so infected with envy, that it has ever a mixture of it. They, however, think better who regard the Spirit of God as intended; for it is he that is given

to dwell in us. I then take the Spirit as that of God, and read the sentence as a question; for it was his object to prove, that because they envied they were not ruled by the Spirit of God; because he teaches the faithful otherwise; and this he confirms in the next verse, by adding that he *giveth more grace*.

For it is an argument arising from what is contrary. Envy is a proof or sign of malignity; but the Spirit of God proves himself to be bountiful by the affluence of his blessings. There is then nothing more repugnant to his nature than envy. In short, James denies that the Spirit of God rules where depraved lusts prevail, which excite to mutual contention; because it is peculiarly the office of the Spirit to enrich men more and more continually with new gifts.

I will not stop to refute other explanations. Some give this meaning that the Spirit lusteth against envy; which is too harsh and forced. Then they say that God *gives more grace* to conquer and subdue lust. But the meaning I have given is more suitable and simple, — that he restores us by his bounty from the power of malignant emulation. The continuative particle *δε* is to be taken adversatively, for *ἀλλὰ* or *ἀλλὰ γε*; so have I rendered it *quin*, but.

<b>JAMES 4:7-10</b>	
<b>7</b> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.	<b>7</b> Subjecti igitur estote Deo; Resistite diabolo, et fugiet a vobis;
<b>8</b> Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.	<b>8</b> Appropinquate Deo, et appropinquabit vobis; mundate manus, peccatores; purificate corda duplici animo;
<b>9</b> Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.	<b>9</b> Affligimini, lugete et plorate; risus vester in luctum vertatur et gaudium in moerorem.
<b>10</b> Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.	<b>10</b> Humiliamini coram Deo, et eriget vos.

**7. *Submit yourselves*.** The submission which he recommends is that of humility; for he does not exhort us generally to obey God, but requires submission; for the Spirit of God

rests on the humble and the meek. (Isaiah 57:15.) On this account he uses the illative particle. For as he had declared that God's Spirit is bountiful in increasing his gifts, he hence concludes that we ought to lay aside envy, and to submit to God.

Many copies have introduced here the following sentence: "Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." But in others it is not found. Erasmus suspects that it was first a note in the margin, and afterwards crept into the text. It may have been so, though it is not unsuitable to the passage. For what some think, that it is strange that what is found only in Peter, should be quoted as Scripture, may be easily disposed of. But I rather conjecture that this sentence which accords with the common doctrine of Scripture, had become then a sort of proverbial saying common among the Jews. And, indeed, it is no more than what is found in Psalm 18:27,

"The humble O Lord, thou wilt save;  
and the eyes of the proud wilt thou cast down:"

and similar sentences are found in many other passages.

*Resist the devil.* He shews what that contention is which we ought to engage in, as Paul says, that our contest is not with flesh and blood, but he stimulates us to a spiritual fight. Then, after having taught us meekness towards men, and submission towards God, he brings before us Satan as our enemy, whom it behooves us to fight against.

However, the promise which he adds, respecting the fleeing of Satan, seems to be refuted by daily experience; for it is certain, that the more strenuously any one resists, the more fiercely he is urged. For Satan, in a manner, acts playfully, when he is not in earnest repelled; but against those who really resist him, he employs all the strength he possesses. And further, he is never wearied with fighting; but when conquered in one battle, he immediately engages in another. To this I reply, that fleeing is to be taken here for putting to flight, or routing. And, doubtless, though he repeats his attacks continually, he yet always departs vanquished.

8. *Draw nigh to God.* He again reminds us that the aid of God will not be wanting to us, provided we give place to him. For when he bids us to draw nigh to God, that we may know him to be near to us he intimates that we are destitute of his grace, because we withdraw from him. But as God stands on our side, there is no reason to fear succumbing. But if any one concludes from this passage, that the first part of the work belongs to us, and that afterwards the grace of God follows, the Apostle meant no such thing; for though we ought to do this, yet it does immediately follow that we can. And the Spirit of God, in exhorting us to our duty, derogates nothing from himself, or from his own power; but the very thing he bids us to do, he himself fulfills in us.



In short, James meant no other thing in this passage, than that God is never wanting to us, except when we alienate ourselves from him. He is like one who brings the hungry to a table and the thirsty to a fountain. There is this difference, that our steps must be guided and sustained by the Lord, for our feet fail us. But what some cavil at, and say, that God's grace is secondary to our preparation, and as it were the waiting-maid, is only frivolous; for we know that it is no new thing that he adds now to former graces and thus enriches more and more those to whom he has already given much.

*Cleanse your hands.* He here addresses all those who were alienated from God and he does not refer to two sorts of men, but he calls the same *sinner*s and *double-minded*. Nor does he understand every kind of sinners, but the wicked and those of a corrupt life. It is said in John 9:3,

“God does not hear sinners;”

in the same sense a woman is called a sinner by Luke. (Luke 7:36.) It is said by the same and the other evangelists, “He drinketh and eateth with sinners.” He, therefore, does not smite all indiscriminately to that sort of repentance mentioned here, but those who are wicked and corrupt in heart, and whose life is base and flagitious or at least wicked; it is from these he requires a purity of heart and outward cleanliness.

We hence learn what is the true character of repentance. It is not only an outward amendment of life, but its beginning is the cleansing of the heart. It is also necessary on the other hand that the fruits of inward repentance should appear in the brightness of our works.

9. *Be afflicted and mourn.* Christ denounces mourning on those who laugh, as a curse, (Luke 6:25;) and James, in what shortly follows, alluding to the same words, threatens the rich with mourning. But here he speaks of that salutary mourning or sorrow which leads us to repentance. He addresses those who, being inebriated in their minds, did not perceive God's judgment. Thus it happened that they flattered themselves in their vices. That he might shake off from them this deadly torpor, he admonishes them to learn to mourn, that being touched with sorrow of conscience they might cease to flatter themselves and to exult on the verge of destruction. Then *laughter* is to be taken as signifying the flattering with which the ungodly deceive themselves, while they are infatuated by the sweetness of their sins and forget the judgment of God.

10. *Humble yourselves,* or, be ye humbled. The conclusion of what is gone before is, that the grace of God then be ready to raise us up when he sees that our proud spirits are laid aside. We emulate and envy, because we desire to be eminent. This is a way wholly unreasonable, for it is God's peculiar work to raise up the lowly, and especially those who willingly humble themselves. Whosoever, then, seeks a firm elevation, let him be cast down under a sense of his own infirmity, and think humbly of himself. Augustine well observes somewhere, As a tree must strike deep roots downwards, that it may

grow upwards, so every one who has not his soul fixed deep in humility, exalts himself to his own ruin.

<b>JAMES 4:11-12</b>	
<b>11</b> Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.	<b>11</b> Ne detrahatis invicem, fratres; qui detrahit fratri, aut judicat fratrem suum, detrahit legi, et judicat legem; si autem judicas legem, non es factor legis sed judex.
<b>12</b> There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?	<b>12</b> Unus est legislator, qui potest servare et perdere: tu, quis es qui judicas alterum?

**11.** *Speak not evil*, or, defame not. We see how much labor James takes in correcting the lust for slandering. For hypocrisy is always presumptuous, and we are by nature hypocrites, fondly exalting ourselves by calumniating others. There is also another disease innate in human nature, that every one would have all others to live according to his own will or fancy. This presumption James suitably condemns in this passage, that is, because we dare to impose on our brethren our rule of life. He then takes *detractio* as including all the calumnies and suspicious works which flow from a malignant and perverted judgment. The evil of slandering takes a wide range; but here he properly refers to that kind of slandering which I have mentioned, that is, when we superciliously determine respecting the deeds and sayings of others, as though our own morosity were the law, when we confidently condemn whatever does not please us.

That such presumption is here reproved is evident from the reason that is immediately added, *He that speaketh evil of*, or defames *his brother, speaketh evil of*, or defames the law. He intimates, that so much is taken away from the law as one claims of authority over his brethren. Detraction, then, against the law is opposed to that reverence with which it behooves us to regard it.

Paul handles nearly the same argument in Romans 14, though on a different occasion. For when superstition in the choice of meats possessed some, what they thought unlawful for themselves, they condemned also in others. He then reminded them, that there is but one Lord, according to whose will all must stand or fall, and at whose tribunal we must all appear. Hence he concludes that he who judges his brethren according to his own view of things, assumes to himself what peculiarly belongs to

God. But James reproves here those who under the pretense of sanctity condemned their brethren, and therefore set up their own morosity in the place of the divine law. He, however, employs the same reason with Paul, that is, that we act presumptuously when we assume authority over our brethren, while the law of God subordinates us all to itself without exception. Let us then learn that we are not to judge but according to God's law.

*Thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.* This sentence ought to be thus explained: "When thou claimest for thyself a power to censure above the law of God thou exemptest thyself from the duty of obeying the law." He then who rashly judges his brother; shakes off the yoke of God, for he submits not to the common rule of life. It is then an argument from what is contrary; because the keeping of the law is wholly different from this arrogance, when men ascribe to their conceit the power and authority of the law. It hence follows, that we then only keep the law, when we wholly depend on its teaching alone and do not otherwise distinguish between good and evil; for all the deeds and words of men ought to be regulated by it.

Were any one to object and say, that still the saints will be the judges of the world, (1 Corinthians 6:2,) the answer is obvious, that this honor does not belong to them according to their own right, but inasmuch as they are the members of Christ; and that they now judge according to the law, so that they are not to be deemed judges because they only obediently assent to God as their own judge and the judge of all. With regard to God he is not to be deemed the doer of the law, because his righteousness is prior to the law; for the law has flown from the eternal and infinite righteousness of God as a river from its fountain.

**12. *There is one lawgiver.*** Now he connects the power of saying and destroying with the office of a lawgiver, he intimates that the whole majesty of God is forcibly assumed by those who claim for themselves the right of making a law; and this is what is done by those who impose as a law on others their own nod or will. And let us remember that the subject here is not civil government, in which the edicts and laws of magistrates have place, but the spiritual government of the soul, in which the word of God alone ought to bear rule. There is then one God, who has consciences subjected by right to his own laws, as he alone has in his own hand the power to save and to destroy.

It hence appears what is to be thought of human precepts, which cast the snare of necessity on consciences. Some indeed would have us to shew modesty, when we call the Pope antichrist, who exercises tyranny over the souls of men, making himself a lawgiver equal to God. But we learn from this passage something far more, even that they are the members of Antichrist, who willingly submit to be thus ensnared, and that they thus renounce Christ, when they connect themselves with a man that is not only a mortal, but who also extols himself against him. It is, I say, a prevaricating obedience,

rendered to the devil, when we allow any other than God himself to be a lawgiver to rule our souls.

*Who art thou.* Some think that they are admonished here to become reprovers of their own vices, in order that they might begin to examine themselves, and that by finding out that they were not purer than others, they might cease to be so severe. I think that their own condition is simply suggested to men, so that they may think how much they are below that dignity which they assumed, as Paul also says, "Who art thou who judgest another?" (Romans 14:4.)

<b>JAMES 4:13-17</b>	
<b>13</b> Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:	<b>13</b> Age nunc, qui dicitis, Hodie et cras eamus in civitatem, et transigamus illic annum unum, et mercemur et lucremur;
<b>14</b> Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.	<b>14</b> Qui nescitis quid cras futurum sit; quae enim est vita nostra? vapor est scilicet ad exiguum tempus apparens, deinde evanescens:
<b>15</b> For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.	<b>15</b> Quum dicere debeatis, Si Dominus voluerit, et vixerimus, faciemus hoc vel illud.
<b>16</b> But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.	<b>16</b> Nunc autem gloriamini in superbiis vestris; omnia gloriatio talis, mala est.
<b>17</b> Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.	<b>17</b> Qui ergo novit facere bonum, nec facit, peccati reus est.

**13. *Go to now.*** He condemns here another kind of presumption, that many, who ought to have depended on God's providence, confidently settled what they were to do, and arranged their plans for a long time, as though they had many years at their own

disposal, while they were not sure, no not even of one moment. Solomon also sharply ridicules this kind of foolish boasting, when he says that

“men settle their ways in their heart, and that the Lord in the mean time rules the tongue.” (Proverbs 16:1.)

And it is a very insane thing to undertake to execute what we cannot pronounce with our tongue. James does not reprove the form of speaking, but rather the arrogance of mind, that men should forget their own weakness, and speak thus presumptuously; for even the godly, who think humbly of themselves, and acknowledge that their steps are guided by the will of God, may yet sometimes say, without any qualifying clause, that they will do this or that. It is indeed right and proper, when we promise anything as to future time, to accustom ourselves to such words as these, “If it shall please the Lord,” “If the Lord will permit.” But no scruple ought to be entertained, as though it were a sin to omit them; for we read everywhere in the Scriptures that the holy servants of God spoke unconditionally of future things, when yet they had it as a principle fixed in their minds, that they could do nothing without the permission of God. Then as to the practice of saying, “If the Lord will or permit,” it ought to be carefully attended to by all the godly.

But James roused the stupidity of those who disregarded God’s providence, and claimed for themselves a whole year, though they had not a single moment in their own power; the gain which was afar off they promised to themselves, though they had no possession of that which was before their feet.

**14. *For what is your life?*** He might have checked this foolish license in determining things to come by many other reasons; for we see how the Lord daily frustrates those presumptuous men who promise what great things they will do. But he was satisfied with this one argument, who has promised to thee a life for to-morrow? Canst thou, a dying man, do what thou so confidently resolvest to do? For he who remembers the shortness of his life, will have his audacity easily checked so as not to extend too far his resolves. Nay, for no other reason do ungodly men indulge themselves so much, but because they forget that they are men. By the similitude of *vapor*, he strikingly shews that the purposes which are founded only on the present life, are altogether evanescent.

**15. *If the Lord will.*** A twofold condition is laid down, “If we shall live so long,” and, “If the Lord will;” because many things may intervene to upset what we may have determined; for we are blind as to all future events. By will he means not that which is expressed in the law, but God’s counsel by which he governs all things.

**16. *But now ye rejoice,*** or, glory. We may learn from these words that James condemned something more than a passing speech. *Ye rejoice*, or, glory, he says, in your empty boastings. Though they robbed God of his government, they yet flattered themselves;

not that they openly set themselves up as superior to God, though they were especially inflated with confidence in themselves, but that their minds were inebriated with vanity so as to disregard God. And as warnings of this kind are usually received with contempt by ungodly men – nay, this answer is immediately given, “known to ourselves is what is offered to us, so that there is no need of such a warning;” – he alleges against them this knowledge in which they gloried, and declares that they sinned the more grievously, because they did not sin through ignorance, but through contempt.

# CHAPTER 5

JAMES 5:1-6	
<b>1</b> Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.	<b>1</b> Agedum nunc divites, plorate, ululantes super miseriis vestris quae advenient vobis.
<b>2</b> Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.	<b>2</b> Divitiae vestrae putrefactae sunt, vestimenta vestra a tineis excesa sunt.
<b>3</b> Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.	<b>3</b> Aurum et argentum vestrum aerugine corruptum est; et aerugo eorum in testimonium vobis erit, et exedet carnes vestras sicut ignis: thesaurum conguessistis in extremis diebus.
<b>4</b> Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.	<b>4</b> Ecce merces operariorum, qui messuerunt regiones vestras, quae fraude aversa est a vobis, clamat; et clamores eorum qui messuerunt, in aures Domini Sabaoth introierunt.
<b>5</b> Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.	<b>5</b> In deliciis vixistis super terram; lacivistis, enutristis corda vestra, sicut in die mactationis.
<b>6</b> Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.	<b>6</b> Condemnastis et occidistis justum, et non resistit vobis.



1. *Go to now*. They are mistaken, as I think, who consider that James here exhorts the rich to repentance. It seems to me to be a simple denunciation of God's judgment, by which he meant to terrify them without giving them any hope of pardon; for all that he says tends only to despair. He, therefore, does not address them in order to invite them to repentance; but, on the contrary, he has a regard to the faithful, that they, hearing of the miserable and of the rich, might not envy their fortune, and also that knowing that God would be the avenger of the wrongs they suffered, they might with a calm and resigned mind bear them.

But he does not speak of the rich indiscriminately, but of those who, being immersed in pleasures and inflated with pride, thought of nothing but of the world, and who, like inexhaustible gulfs, devoured everything; for they, by their tyranny, oppressed others, as it appears from the whole passage.

*Weep and howl*, or, Lament, howling. Repentance has indeed its weeping, but being mixed with consolation, it does not proceed to howling. Then James intimates that the heaviness of God's vengeance will be so horrible and severe on the rich, that they will be constrained to break forth into howling, as though he had said briefly to them, "Woe to you!" But it is a prophetic mode of speaking: the ungodly have the punishment which awaits them set before them, and they are represented as already enduring it. As, then, they were now flattering themselves, and promising to themselves that the prosperity in which they thought themselves happy would be perpetual, he declared that the most grievous miseries were nigh at hand.

2. *Your riches*. The meaning may be twofold: — that he ridicules their foolish confidence, because the riches in which they placed their happiness, were wholly fading, yea, that they could be reduced to nothing by one blast from God — or that he condemns as their insatiable avarice, because they heaped together wealth only for this, that they might perish without any benefit. This latter meaning is the most suitable. It is, indeed, true that those rich men are insane who glory in things so fading as garments, gold, silver, and such things, since it is nothing else than to make their glory subject to rust and moths; and well known is that saying "What is ill got is soon lost;" because the curse of God consumes it all, for it is not right that the ungodly or their heirs should enjoy riches which they have snatched, as it were, by violence from the hand of God.

But as James enumerates the vices of which the rich brought on themselves the calamity which he mentions, the context requires, as I think, that we should say, that what he condemns here is the extreme rapacity of the rich, in retaining everything they could lay hold on, that it might rot uselessly in their chests. For thus it was, that what God had created for the use of men, they destroyed, as though they were the enemies of mankind.

But it must be observed, that the vices which he mentions here do not belong to all the rich; for some of them indulge themselves in luxury, some spend much in show and display, and some pinch themselves, and live miserably in their own filth. Let us, then, know that he here reproveth some vices in some, and some vices in others. However, all those are generally condemned who unjustly accumulate riches, or who foolishly abuse them. But what James now says, is not only suitable to the rich of extreme tenacity, (such as Euclio of Plautus,) but to those also who delight in pomp and luxury, and yet prefer to heap up riches rather than to employ them for necessary purposes. For such is the malignity of some, that they grudge to others the common sun and air.

3. *A witness against you.* He confirms the explanation I have already given. For God has not appointed gold for rust, nor garments for moths; but, on the contrary, he has designed them as aids and helps to human life. Therefore, even spending without benefit is a witness of inhumanity. The rusting of gold and silver will be, as it were, the occasion of inflaming the wrath of God, so that it will, like fire, consume them.

*Ye have heaped treasure together:* These words may also admit of two explanations: — that the rich, as they would always live, are never satisfied, but weary themselves in heaping together what may be sufficient to the end of the world, — or, that they heap together the wrath and curse of God for the last day; and this second view I embrace.

4. *Behold, the hire.* He now condemns cruelty, the invariable companion of avarice. But he refers only to one kind, which, above all others, ought justly to be deemed odious. For if a humane and a just man, as Solomon says in Proverbs 12:10, regards the life of his beast, it is a monstrous barbarity, when man feels no pity towards the man whose sweat he has employed for his own benefit. Hence the Lord has strictly forbidden, in the law, the hire of the laborer to sleep with us (Deuteronomy 24:15). Besides, James does not refer to laborers in common, but, for the sake of amplifying, he mentions husbandmen and reapers. For what can be more base than that they, who supply us with bread by their labor should be pined through want? And yet this monstrous thing is common; for there are many of such a tyrannical disposition, that they think that the rest of mankind live only for their benefit alone.

But he says that this hire *crieth*, for whatever men retain either by fraud or by violence, of what belongs to another; it calls for vengeance as it were by a loud voice. We ought to notice what he adds, that the *cries* of the poor come to the ears of God, so that we may know that the wrong done to them shall not be unpunished. They, therefore, who are oppressed by the unjust ought resignedly to sustain their evils, because they will have God as their defender. And they who have the power of doing wrong ought to abstain from injustice, lest they provoke God against them, who is the protector and patron of the poor. And for this reason also he calls God the Lord of Sabaoth, or of hosts, intimating thereby his power and his might, by which he renders his judgment more dreadful.

5. *In pleasure.* He comes now to another vice, even luxury and sinful gratifications; for they who abound in wealth seldom keep within the bounds of moderation, but abuse their abundance by extreme indulgences. There are, indeed, some rich men, as I have said, who pine themselves in the midst of their abundance. For it was not without reason that the poets have imagined Tantalus to be hungry near a table well furnished. There have ever been Tantalians in the world. But James, as it has been said, does not speak of all rich men. It is enough that we see this vice commonly prevailing among the rich, that they are given too much to luxuries, to pomps and superfluities.

And though the Lord allows them to live freely on what they have, yet profusion ought to be avoided and frugality practiced. For it was not in vain that the Lord by his prophets severely reprov'd those who slept on beds of ivory, who used precious ointments, who delighted themselves at their feasts with the sound of the harp, who were like fat cows in rich pastures. For all these things have been said for this end, that we may know that moderation ought to be observed, and that extravagance is displeasing to God.

*Ye have nourished your hearts.* He means that they indulged themselves, not only as far as to satisfy nature, but as far as their cupidity led them. He adds a similitude, *as in a day of slaughter*, because they were wont in their solemn sacrifices to eat more freely than according to their daily habits. He then says, that the rich feasted themselves every day of their life, because they immersed themselves in perpetual indulgences.

6. *Ye have condemned.* Here follows another kind of inhumanity, that the rich by their power oppressed and destroyed the poor and weak. He says by a metaphor that the just were condemned and killed; for when they did not kill them by their own hand, or condemn them as judges, they yet employed the authority which they had to do wrong, they corrupted judgments, and contrived various arts to destroy the innocent, that is, really to condemn and kill them.

By adding that the just did *not resist* them, he intimates that the audacity of the rich was greater; because those whom they oppressed were without any protection. He, however, reminds them that the more ready and prompt would be the vengeance of God, when the poor have no protection from men. But though the just did not resist, because he ought to have patiently endured wrongs, I yet think that their weakness is at the same time referred to, that is he did not resist, because he was unprotected and without any help from men.

### JAMES 5:7-9

7 Be patient therefore,  
brethren, unto the

7 Patienter ergo agite,  
fratres, usque in

coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.	adventum Domini. Ecce agricola expectat pretiosum fructum terrae, patienter se gerens erga eum, donec recipiat pluvium matutinam et vespertinam.
8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.	8 Patienter ergo agite et vos; confirmate corda vestra, quoniam adventus Domini propinquus est.
9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.	9 Ne ingemiscatis alii in alios, fratres, ne condemnemini: ecce iudex stat pro foribus.

7. *Be patient therefore.* From this inference it is evident that what has hitherto been said against the rich, pertains to the consolation of those who seemed for a time to be exposed to their wrongs with impunity. For after having mentioned the causes of those calamities which were hanging over the rich, and having stated this among others, that they proudly and cruelly ruled over the poor, he immediately adds, that we who are unjustly oppressed, have this reason to be patient, because God would become the judge. For this is what he means when he says, *unto the coming of the Lord*, that is, that the confusion of things which is now seen in the world will not be perpetual, because the Lord at his coming will reduce things to order, and that therefore our minds ought to entertain good hope; for it is not without reason that the restoration of all things is promised to us at that day. And though the day of the Lord is everywhere called in the Scriptures a manifestation of his judgment and grace, when he succors his people and chastises the ungodly, yet I prefer to regard the expression here as referring to our final deliverance.

*Behold, the husbandman.* Paul briefly refers to the same similitude in 2 Timothy 2:6, when he says that the husband man ought to labor before he gathers the fruit; but James more fully expresses the idea, for he mentions the daily patience of the husbandman, who, after having committed the seed to the earth, confidently, or at least patiently, waits until the time of harvest comes; nor does he fret because the earth does not immediately yield a ripe fruit. He hence concludes, that we ought not to be immoderately anxious, if we must now labor and sow, until the harvest as it were comes, even the day of the Lord.

*The precious fruit.* He calls it precious, because it is the nourishment of life and the means of sustaining it. And James intimates, that since the husbandman suffers his life, so precious to him, to lie long deposited in the bosom of the earth, and calmly suspends his desire to gather the fruit, we ought not to be too hasty and fretful, but resignedly to wait for the day of our redemption. It is not necessary to specify particularly the other parts of the comparison.

*The early and the latter rains.* By the two words, *early* and *latter*, two seasons are pointed out; the first follows soon after sowing; and the other when the corn is ripening. So the prophets spoke, when they intended to set forth the time for rain, (Deuteronomy 28:12; Joel 2:23; Hosea 6:3.) And he has mentioned both times, in order more fully to shew that husbandmen are not disheartened by the slow progress of time, but bear with the delay.

8. *Stablish your hearts.* Lest any should object and say, that the time of deliverance was too long delayed, he obviates this objection and says, that the Lord was at hand, or (which is the same thing) that his coming was drawing nigh. In the meantime, he bids us to correct the softness of the heart, which weakens us, so as not to persevere in hope. And doubtless the time appears long, because we are too tender and delicate. We ought, then, to gather strength that we may become hardened and this cannot be better attained than by hope, and as it were by a realizing view of the near approach of our Lord.

9. *Grudge not*, or, groan not. As the complaints of many were heard, that they were more severely treated than others, this passage is so explained by some, as though James bade each to be contented with his own lot, not to envy others, nor grudge if the condition of others was more tolerable. But I take another view; for after having spoken of the unhappiness of those who distress good and quiet men by their tyranny, he now exhorts the faithful to be just towards one another and ready to pass by offenses. That this is the real meaning may be gathered from the reason that is added: Be not querulous one against another; *lest ye be condemned.* We may, indeed, groan, when any evil torments us; but he means an accusing groan, when one expostulates with the Lord against another. And he declares that thus they would all be condemned, because there is no one who does not offend his brethren, and afford them an occasion of groaning. Now, if everyone complained, they would all have accused one another; for no one was so innocent, that he did not do some harm to others.

God will be the common judge of all. What, then, will be the case, but that every one who seeks to bring judgment on others, must allow the same against himself; and thus all will be given up to the same ruin. Let no one, then, ask for vengeance on others, except he wishes to bring it on his own head. And lest they should be hasty in making complaints of this kind, he declares that the judge was at the door. For as our propensity is to profane the name of God, in the slightest offenses we appeal to his

judgment. Nothing is a fitter bridle to check our rashness, than to consider that our imprecations vanish not into air, because God's judgment is at hand.

<b>JAMES 5:10-11</b>	
<b>10</b> Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.	<b>10</b> Exemplum accipite afflictionis, fratres mei, et tolerantiae, prophetas, qui loquuti sunt in nomine Domini.
<b>11</b> Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.	<b>11</b> Ecce beatos esse ducimus eos qui sustinent: patientiam Job audistis, et finem Domini vidistis, quod multum sit misericors et commiserans.

**10. *Take, my brethren, the prophets.*** The comfort which he brings is not that which is according to the common proverb, that the miserable hope for like companions in evils. That they set before them associates, in whose number it was desirable to be classed; and to have the same condition with them, was no misery. For as we must necessarily feel extreme grief, when any evil happens to us which the children of God have never experienced, so it is a singular consolation when we know that we suffer nothing different from them; nay, when we know that we have to sustain the same yoke with them.

When Job heard from his friends,

*“Turn to the saints, can you find any like to thee?”  
(Job 5:1,)*

it was the voice of Satan, because he wished to drive him to despair. When, on the other hand, the Spirit by the mouth of James designs to raise us up to a good hope, he shews to us all the fore-going saints, who as it were stretch out their hand to us, and by their example encourage us to undergo and to conquer afflictions.

The life of men is indeed indiscriminately subject to troubles and adversities; but James did not bring forward any kind of men for examples, for it would have availed nothing to perish with the multitude; but he chose the prophets, a fellowship with whom is blessed. Nothing so breaks us down and disheartens us as the feeling of misery; it is



therefore a real consolation to know that those things commonly deemed evils are aids and helps to our salvation. This is, indeed, what is far from being understood by the flesh; yet the faithful ought to be convinced of this, that they are happy when by various troubles they are proved by the Lord. To convince us of this, James reminds us to consider the end or design of the afflictions endured by the prophets; for as our own evils we are without judgment, being influenced by grief, sorrow, or some other immoderate feelings, as we see nothing under a foggy sky and in the midst of storms, and being tossed here and there as it were by a tempest, it is therefore necessary for us to cast our eyes to another quarter, where the sky is in a manner serene and bright. When the afflictions of the saints are related to us, there is no one who will allow that they were miserable, but, on the contrary, that they were happy.

Then James has done well for us; for he has laid before our eyes a pattern, that we may learn to look at it whenever we are tempted to impatience or to despair: and he takes this principle as granted, that the prophets were blessed in their afflictions, for they courageously sustained them. Since it was so, he concludes that the same judgment ought to be formed of us when afflicted.

And he says, *the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord*; by which he intimates that they were accepted and approved by God. If, then, it had been useful for them to have been free from miseries, doubtless God would have kept them free. But it was otherwise. It hence follows that afflictions are salutary to the faithful. He, therefore, bids them to be taken as an example of suffering affliction. But patience also must be added, which is a real evidence of our obedience. Hence he has joined them both together.

**11. *The patience of Job.*** Having spoken generally of the prophets, he now refers to an example remarkable above others; for no one, as far as we can learn from histories, has ever been overwhelmed with troubles so hard and so various as Job; and yet he emerged from so deep a gulf. Whosoever, then, will imitate his patience, will no doubt find God's hand, which at length delivered him, to be the same. We see for what end his history has been written. God suffered not his servant Job to sink, because he patiently endured his afflictions. Then he will disappoint the patience of no one.

If, however, it be asked, Why does the Apostle so much commend the patience of Job, as he had displayed many signs of impatience, being carried away by a hasty spirit? To this I reply, that though he sometimes failed through the infirmity of the flesh, or murmured within himself, yet he ever surrendered himself to God, and was ever willing to be restrained and ruled by him. Though, then, his patience was somewhat deficient, it is yet deservedly commended.

*The end of the Lord.* By these words he intimates that afflictions ought ever to be estimated by their end. For at first God seems to be far away, and Satan in the meantime revels in the confusion; the flesh suggests to us that we are forsaken of God and lost. We



ought, then, to extend our view farther, for near and around us there appears no light. Moreover, he has called it the end of the Lord, because it is his work to give a prosperous issue to adversities. If we do our duty in bearing evils obediently, he will by no means be wanting in performing his part. Hope directs us only to the end; God will then shew himself very merciful, how ever rigid and severe he may seem to be while afflicting us.

<b>JAMES 5:12-13</b>	
<b>12</b> But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.	<b>12</b> Ante omnia vero, fratres mei, Ne juretis, neque per coelum, neque per terram, neque aliud quodvis jusjurandum; sit autem vestrum. Est, est; Non, non: ne in judicium (vel, simulationem) incidatis.
<b>13</b> Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.	<b>13</b> Affligitur quis inter vos? oret: hilari est animo? psallat.

**12. *But above all things.*** It has been a common vice almost in all ages, to swear lightly and inconsiderately. For so bad is our nature that we do not consider what an atrocious crime it is to profane the name of God. For though the Lord strictly commands us to reverence his name, yet men devise various subterfuges, and think that they can swear with impunity. They imagine, then, that there is no evil, provided they do not openly mention the name of God; and this is an old gloss. So the Jews, when they swore by heaven or earth, thought that they did not profane God's name, because they did not mention it. But while men seek to be ingenious in dissembling with God, they delude themselves with the most frivolous evasions.

It was a vain excuse of this kind that Christ condemned in Matthew 5:34. James, now subscribing to the decree of his master, commands us to abstain from these indirect forms of swearing: for whosoever swears in vain and on frivolous occasions, profanes God's name, whatever form he may give to his words. Then the meaning is, that it is not more lawful to swear by heaven or by the earth, than openly by the name of God. The reason is mentioned by Christ — because the glory of God is everywhere inscribed, and everywhere shines forth. Nay, men take the words, heaven and earth, in their oaths, in no other sense and for no other purpose, than if they named God himself; for by thus speaking they only designate the Worker by his works.

But he says, *above all things*; because the profanation of God's name is not a slight offense. The Anabaptists, building on this passage, condemn all oaths, but they only shew their ignorance. For James does not speak of oaths in general, nor does Christ in the passage to which I have referred; but both condemn that evasion which had been devised, when men took the liberty to swear without expressing the name of God, which was a liberty repugnant to the prohibition of the law.

And this is what the words clearly mean, *Neither by heaven, neither by the earth*. For, if the question had been as to oaths in themselves, to what purpose were these forms mentioned? It then appears evident that both by Christ and by James the puerile astuteness of those is reprov'd who taught that they could swear with impunity, provided they adopted some circuitous expressions. That we may, then, understand the meaning of James, we must understand first the precept of the law, "Thou shalt not take the name of God *in vain*." It hence appears clear, that there is a right and lawful use of God's name. Now, James condemns those who did not indeed dare in a direct way to profane God's name, but endeavored to evade the profanation which the law condemns, by circumlocutions.

*But let your yea be yea*. He brings the best remedy to correct the vice which he condemns, that is, that they were habitually to keep themselves to truth and faithfulness in all their sayings. For whence is the wicked habit of swearing, except that such is the falsehood of men, that their words alone are not believed? For, if they observed faithfulness, as they ought, in their words, there would have been no necessity of so many superfluous oaths. As, then, the perfidy or levity of men is the fountain from which the vice of swearing flows, in order to take away the vice, James teaches us that the fountain ought to be removed; for the right way of healing is to begin with the cause of illness.

Some copies have, "Let your word (or speech) be, yea, yea; no, no." The true reading however, is what I have given, and is commonly received; and what he means I have already explained, that is, that we ought to tell the truth, and to be faithful in our words. To the same purpose is what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:18, that he was not in his preaching yea and nay, but pursued the same course from the beginning.

*Lest ye fall into condemnation*. There is a different reading, owing to the affinity of the words ὑπὸ κρίσιν and ὑπόκρισιν. If you read, "into judgment" or condemnation, the sense will clearly be, that to take God's name in vain will not be unpunished. But it is not unsuitable to say, "into hypocrisy;" because when simplicity, as it has been already said, prevails among us, the occasion for superfluous oaths is cut off. If, then, fidelity appears in all we say, the dissimulation, which leads us to swear rashly, will be removed.

**13.** *Is any among you afflicted?* he means that there is no time in which God does not invite us to himself. For afflictions ought to stimulate us to pray; prosperity supplies us

with an occasion to praise God. But such is the perverseness of men, that they cannot rejoice without forgetting God, and that when afflicted they are disheartened and driven to despair. We ought, then, to keep within due bounds, so that the joy, which usually makes us to forget God, may induce us to set forth the goodness of God, and that our sorrow may teach us to pray. For he has set the *singing of psalms* in opposition to profane and unbridled joy; and thus they express their joy who are led, as they ought to be, by prosperity to God.

<b>JAMES 5:14-15</b>	
<b>14</b> Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:	<b>14</b> Infirmatur quis inter vos? Advocet presbyteros ecclesiae, et orent super eum, unguentes oleo in nomine Domini:
<b>15</b> And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.	<b>15</b> Et oratio fidei servabit aegrotum, et excitabit eum Dominus; et si peccata admiserit, remittentur illi.

**14.** *Is any sick among you.* As the gift of healing as yet continued, he directs the sick to have recourse to that remedy. It is, indeed, certain that they were not all healed; but the Lord granted this favor as often and as far as he knew it would be expedient; nor is it probable that the oil was indiscriminately applied, but only when there was some hope of restoration. For, together with the power there was given also discretion to the ministers, lest they should by abuse profane the symbol. The design of James was no other than to commend the grace of God which the faithful might then enjoy, lest the benefit of it should be lost through contempt or neglect.

For this purpose he ordered the presbyters to be sent for, but the use of the anointing must have been confined to the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Papists boast mightily of this passage, when they seek to pass off their extreme unction. But how different their corruption is from the ancient ordinance mentioned by James I will not at present undertake to shew. Let readers learn this from my Institutes. I will only say this, that this passage is wickedly and ignorantly perverted; when extreme unction is established by it, and is called a sacrament, to be perpetually observed in the Church. I indeed allow that it was used as a sacrament by the disciples of Christ, (for I cannot agree with those who think that it was medicine;) but as the reality of this sign continued only for a time in the Church, the symbol also must have

been only for a time. And it is quite evident, that nothing is more absurd than to call that a sacrament which is void and does not really present to us that which it signifies. That the gift of healing was temporary, all are constrained to allow, and events clearly prove: then the sign of it ought not to be deemed perpetual. It hence follows, that they who at this day set anointing among the sacraments, are not the true followers, but the apes of the Apostles, except they restore the effect produced by it, which God has taken away from the world for more than fourteen hundred years. So we have no dispute, whether anointing was once a sacrament; but whether it has been given to be so perpetually. This latter we deny, because it is evident that the thing signified has long ago ceased.

*The presbyters, or elders, of the church.* I include here generally all those who presided over the Church; for pastors were not alone called presbyters or elders, but also those who were chosen from the people to be as it were censors to protect discipline. For every Church had, as it were, its own senate, chosen from men of weight and of proved integrity. But as it was customary to choose especially those who were endued with gifts more than ordinary, he ordered them to send for the elders, as being those in whom the power and grace of the Holy Spirit more particularly appeared.

*Let them pray over him.* This custom of praying over one was intended to shew, that they stood as it were before God; for when we come as it were to the very scene itself, we utter prayers with more feeling; and not only Elisha and Paul, but Christ himself, roused the ardor of prayer and commended the grace of God by thus praying over persons. (2 Kings 4:32; Acts 20:10; John 11:41.)

15. But it must be observed, that he connects a promise with the prayer, lest it should be made without faith. For he who doubts, as one who does not rightly call on God, is unworthy to obtain anything, as we have seen in the first chapter. Whosoever then really seeks to be heard, must be fully persuaded that he does not pray in vain.

As James brings before us this special gift, to which the external rite was but an addition, we hence learn, that the oil could not have been rightly used without faith. But since it appears that the Papists have no certainty as to their anointing, as it is manifest that they have not the gift, it is evident that their anointing is spurious.

*And if he have committed sins.* This is not added only for the sake of amplifying, as though he had said, that God would give something more to the sick than health of body; but because diseases were very often inflicted on account of sins; and by speaking of their remission he intimates that the cause of the evil would be removed. And we indeed see that David, when afflicted with disease and seeking relief, was wholly engaged in seeking the pardon of his sins. Why did he do this, except that while he acknowledged the effect of his faults in his punishment, he deemed that there was no other remedy, but that the Lord should cease to impute to him his sins?

The prophets are full of this doctrine, that men are relieved from their evils when they are loosed from the guilt of their iniquities. Let us then know that it is the only fit remedy for our diseases and other calamities, when we carefully examine ourselves, being solicitous to be reconciled to God, and to obtain the pardon of our sins.

<b>JAMES 5:16-18</b>	
<b>16</b> Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.	<b>16</b> Confitemini invicem peccata vestra, et orate invicem alii pro aliis, ut salvemini: multum valet precatio justii efficac.
<b>17</b> Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.	<b>17</b> Elias homo erat passionibus similiter obnoxius ut nos; et precatone precatus est, ne plueret; et non pluit super terram annos tres et sex menses.
<b>18</b> And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.	<b>18</b> Et rursum oravit, et coelum dedit pluviam, et terra protulit fructum suum.

**16.** *Confess your faults one to another.* In some copies the illative particle is given, nor is it unsuitable; for though when not expressed, it must be understood. He had said, that sins were remitted to the sick over whom the elders prayed: he now reminds them how useful it is to discover our sins to our brethren, even that we may obtain the pardon of them by their intercession.

This passage, I know, is explained by many as referring to the reconciling of offenses; for they who wish to return to favor must necessarily know first their own faults and confess them. For hence it comes, that hatreds take root, yea, and increase and become irreconcilable, because every one perniciously defends his own cause. Many therefore think that James points out here the way of brotherly reconciliation, that is, by mutual acknowledgment of sins. But as it has been said, his object was different; for he connects mutual prayer with mutual confession; by which he intimates that confession avails for this end, that we may be helped as to God by the prayers of our brethren; for they who

know our necessities, are stimulated to pray that they may assist us; but they to whom our diseases are unknown are more tardy to bring us help.

Wonderful, indeed, is the folly or the insincerity of the Papists, who strive to build their whispering confession on this passage. For it would be easy to infer from the words of James, that the priests alone ought to confess. For since a mutual, or to speak more plainly, a reciprocal confession is demanded here, no others are bidden to confess their own sins, but those who in their turn are fit to hear the confession of others; but this the priests claim for themselves alone. Then confession is required of them alone. But since their puerilities do not deserve a refutation, let the true and genuine explanation already given be deemed sufficient by us.

For the words clearly mean, that confession is required for no other end, but that those who know our evils may be more solicitous to bring us help.

*Avaieth much.* That no one may think that this is done without fruit, that is, when others pray for us, he expressly mentions the benefit and the effect of prayer. But he names expressly the *prayer of a righteous* or just *man*; because God does not hear the ungodly; nor is access to God open, except through a good conscience: not that our prayers are founded on our own worthiness, but because the heart must be cleansed by faith before we can present ourselves before God. Then James testifies that the righteous or the faithful pray for us beneficially and not without fruit.

But what does he mean by adding *effectual* or *efficacious*? For this seems superfluous; for if the prayer avails much, it is doubtless effectual. The ancient interpreter has rendered it "assiduous;" but this is too forced. For James uses the Greek participle, *ἐνεργουμένη*, which means "working." And the sentence may be thus explained, "It avails much, because it is effectual." As it is an argument drawn from this principle, that God will not allow the prayers of the faithful to be void or useless, he does not therefore unjustly conclude that it avails much. But I would rather confine it to the present case: for our prayers may properly be said to be *ἐνεργούμεναι*, working, when some necessity meets us which excites in us earnest prayer. We pray daily for the whole Church, that God may pardon its sins; but then only is our prayer really in earnest, when we go forth to succor those who are in trouble. But such efficacy cannot be in the prayers of our brethren, except they know that we are in difficulties. Hence the reason given is not general, but must be specially referred to the former sentence.

**17. *Elias was a man.*** There are innumerable instances in Scripture of what he meant to prove; but he chose one that is remarkable above all others; for it was a great thing that God should make heaven in a manner subject to the prayers of Elias, so as to obey his wishes. Elias kept heaven shut by his prayers for three years and a half; he again opened it, so that it poured down abundance of rain. Hence appeared the wonderful power of prayer. Well known is this remarkable history, and is found in 1 Kings 17 and



1 Kings 18. And though it is not there expressly said, that Elias prayed for drought, it may yet be easily gathered, and that the rain also was given to his prayers.

But we must notice the application of the example. James does not say that drought ought to be sought from the Lord, because Elias obtained it; for we may by inconsiderate zeal presumptuously and foolishly imitate the Prophet. We must then observe the rule of prayer, so that it may be by faith. He, therefore, thus accommodates this example, — that if Elias was heard, so also we shall be heard when we rightly pray. For as the command to pray is common, and as the promise is common, it follows that the effect also will be common.

Lest any one should object and say, that we are far distant from the dignity of Elias, he places him in our own rank, by saying, that he was a mortal *man* and *subject to the same passions* with ourselves. For we profit less by the examples of saints, because we imagine them to have been half gods or heroes, who had peculiar intercourse with God; so that because they were heard, we receive no confidence. In order to shake off this heathen and profane superstition, James reminds us that the saints ought to be considered as having the infirmity of the flesh; so that we may learn to ascribe what they obtained from the Lord, not to their merits, but to the efficacy of prayer.

It hence appears how childish the Papists are, who teach men to flee to the protection of saints, because they had been heard by the Lord. For thus they reason, “Because he obtained what he asked as long as he lived in the world, he will be now after death our best patron.” This sort of subtle refinement was altogether unknown to the Holy Spirit. For James on the contrary argues, that as their prayers availed so much, so we ought in like manner to pray at this day according to their example, and that we shall not do so in vain.

JAMES 5:19-20	
19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;	19 Fratres mei, si quis inter vos erraverit a veritate, et converterit quispiam eum;
20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.	20 Cognoscat quod qui converterit peccatorem ab errore viae suae, servabit animam a morte, et multitudinem operiet peccatorum.

20. *Let him know.* I doubt whether this ought rather to have been written, *γινώσκετε*, “know ye.” Both ways the meaning however is the same. For James recommends to us



the correction of our brethren from the effect produced that we may more assiduously attend to this duty. Nothing is better or more desirable than to deliver a soul from eternal death; and this is what he does who restores an erring brother to the right way: therefore a work so excellent ought by no means to be neglected. To give food to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, we see how much Christ values such acts; but the salvation of the soul is esteemed by him much more precious than the life of the body. We must therefore take heed lest souls perish through our sloth, whose salvation God puts in a manner in our hands. Not that we can bestow salvation on them; but that God by our ministry delivers and saves those who seem otherwise to be nigh destruction.

Some copies have *his soul*, which makes no change in the sense. I, however, prefer the other reading, for it has more force in it.

*And shall hide a multitude of sins.* He makes an allusion to a saying of Solomon, rather than a quotation. (Proverbs 10:12.) Solomon says that love covers sins, as hatred proclaims them. For they who hate burn with the desire of mutual slander; but they who love are disposed to exercise mutual forbearance. Love, then, buries sins as to men. James teaches here something higher, that is, that sins are blotted out before God; as though he had said, Solomon has declared this as the fruit of love, that it covers sins; but there is no better or more excellent way of covering them than when they are wholly abolished before God. And this is done when the sinner is brought by our admonition to the right way: we ought then especially and more carefully to attend to this duty.

**END OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES**