

NOTES ON THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

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COMMENTARY ON JAMES 1

Jas.1:1¹

It is not possible to say with certainty whether this is James the son of Alphaeus (Acts 1:13²), called James the less, or James the Lord's brother (Gal.1:19³). See note on Jud.1⁴. He describes himself as a servant, bondservant or slave, of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. He addresses his epistle to the twelve tribes of or in the Dispersion. Those addressed were such of the twelve scattered tribes of Israel as had embraced the gospel, and not all Jews of the Dispersion, and those who had embraced the gospel were in the Fellowship of God's Son, as in Acts 2:42⁵ and 1 Cor.1:9⁶: It is clear from the address that James did not believe in what are called by some "the lost ten tribes." In his salutation he wished them joy.

Jas.1:2⁷,3⁸,4⁹

We are to esteem it all joy when we fall into various temptations (Gk. *peirasmos*, a trying, putting to the proof; this is not a bad

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%201.13>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal.1.19>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jude.1>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%202.42>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.1.9>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.2>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.3>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.4>

word in itself, but it is frequently used of temptation or solicitation to sin, from the flesh, from Satan and the world.) By temptation there is a proving (Gk. dokimion, “that by which anything is being tried”). Greek dokimos, a proving, is generally used in a good sense to reveal the excellence of what is proved, so that it may be approved. James says that the proof (dokimion) of your faith worketh endurance. Peter also speaks of the proof of faith: “Though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold temptations, that the proof (dokimion) of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at (in) the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet.1:6¹⁰,7¹¹).

The proving of faith through temptations may at the coming of the Lord be seen to have been unto God’s glory and will in consequence be unto our glory. In the meantime it worketh endurance, which means literally, to remain under trial, to endure it. Paul says, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it” (1 Cor.10:13¹²). The Lord taught His disciples to pray, “Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt.6:13¹³). The Lord was Himself “led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” (Matt.4:1¹⁴).

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.1.6>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%201.7>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.10.13>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.6.13>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.4.1>

James says, “Ye have heard of the patience (endurance) of Job” (Jas.5:11¹⁵). Job said, “But He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10¹⁶). But Elihu said to him, “Would that Job were tried unto the end, because of his answering like wicked men” (Job 34:36¹⁷). If we refuse to endure when temptations gather around us, we shall not be perfect and entire, for in the temptation God has something to teach us that we could not learn in any other way.

Jas.1:5¹⁸

We have an apt illustration of this verse in the case of Solomon. When he was raised to be king over Israel, God told him to ask what He should give him, and it pleased God when he said, “Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this Thy people, that is so great?” Because he had not asked riches, honour, nor the life of his enemies, nor even long life, God gave him wisdom and knowledge such as none had before his time nor after. The wise instruction of his father bore fruit. Solomon said of his father’s teaching, “I was a son unto my father ... and he taught me ... Get wisdom, get understanding; ... Wisdom is the principal thing; ... yea, with all thou hast gotten get understanding ... She shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her” (Prov.4:3-8¹⁹).

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.11>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%2023.10>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%2034.36>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.5>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.4.3-8>

The value of wisdom in dealing with men and in dealing with things amongst God's remnant people cannot be over-estimated. Seeing that God has not chosen many who are wise after the flesh from among men (1 Cor.1:26-29²⁰), we, the foolish things of the world, should have a source of supply of wisdom available to us. Hence we are here told, that if any lack (Gk. leipo, to be left or deserted) wisdom they are to ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and He reproaches us not for our foolishness. Let young men and women ask wisdom from God in the beginning of their lives, that disaster may not overtake them in youth's early days. But let us all take knowledge from the end of Solomon, that wisdom alone will not preserve the life of those who have it. We need the keeping power of God.

Jas.1:6²¹,7²²,8²³

Faith was characteristic of praying Enoch who walked with God. Those who pray must believe that God is and that He rewards them that seek after Him (Heb.11:5²⁴,6²⁵). Hence the persons who pray for wisdom must ask in faith. There must be no doubting, staggering or wavering. Abraham is an example of one who doubted not (Rom.4:20²⁶); "He wavered (same word as in James) not through unbelief." Having come to the decision to ask wisdom, it is to be done without wavering or hesitancy, but

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.1.26-29>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.6>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.7>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.8>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.11.5>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb%2011.6>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.4.20>

rather with assured trustfulness that what has been asked for will be given. The wavering doubter is as unstable as the surge of the sea which is driven by the wind and tossed, but a man of faith is not so moved. A double-minded or two-souled man is unstable, not fixed, inconstant; such will receive nothing from the Lord. To what purpose would it be for the Lord to give wisdom to an unstable man? It would be much like the proverb about a beautiful woman who has no intelligence: “As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, So is a fair woman which is without discretion” (Prov.11:22²⁷). Again, “Wisdom is too high for a fool” (Prov.24:7²⁸).

Jas.1:9²⁹,10³⁰,11³¹

It has been the way of God from ancient times to raise up the lowly. Many scriptures testify to this. “He setteth up on high those that be low” (Job 5:11³²). Hannah in her prayer said, “The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, He also lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill, to make them sit with princes, and inherit the throne of glory” (1 Sam.2:7³³,8³⁴; see also Ps.113:7³⁵,8³⁶). Mary too struck the same note, in Lk.1:52³⁷:

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.11.22>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.24.7>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.9>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.10>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.11>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%205.11>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Sam.2.7>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Sam%202.8>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.113.7>

Thus it was among Christians in the same Fellowship, the poor were exalted and the rich made low, so that in divine things they might be sharers together in common. The greatness of man is not in what he has, but in what he is. The simile which James uses to force home his words to the rich is powerful, in the effect of the burning east wind from the desert on the grass of Palestine. It turned lush pastures to a land of brown stubble, and flowers which adorned the grass just wilted away. “So also,” James said, “shall the rich man fade away in his goings.”

Jas.1:12³⁸

Temptation here, as the following verses show, is from man’s own lust which arises from the flesh. The crown of life is mentioned twice, here and in Rev.2:10³⁹: In the latter place it was promised to those in the church in Smyrna who were faithful unto death in the temptation which they were enduring from the tribulation of their time. They were to have tribulation for ten days. Some were to be cast into prison. The crown of life is promised to those who endure temptation, either from within their own selves or from without, and those who endure temptation manifest in this way their love for the Lord. By enduring temptation saints are proved and approved.

Jas.1:13⁴⁰,14⁴¹,15⁴²,16⁴³

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%20113.8>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.1.52>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.12>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.2.10>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.13>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.14>

It says, in Heb.4:15⁴⁴, “For we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” The “all points” do not include the temptation of which James writes. The Lord was not tempted from lust and sin within as we are. He knew nothing of the lust of the flesh, for “the flesh,” indicative of fallen human nature, had no place in His holy Manhood. There was no sin in Him, and He knew no sin (2 Cor.5:21⁴⁵; 1 Jn 3:5⁴⁶). He came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom.8:3⁴⁷) – not in sinful flesh. His temptations therefore were all from without, from the devil and from the world (Matt.4:11⁴⁸; Jn 16:33⁴⁹). No temptation from without was ever allowed to enter and alight upon and defile His holy humanity. He was ever holy, harmless (guileless), undefiled, separated from sinners (Heb.7:26⁵⁰).

Nevertheless, the temptations which He suffered in His Manhood were real and terrible (Lk.22:28⁵¹; Heb.2:18⁵²). His divine nature, He being of one substance with the Father, was above all temptation, for God cannot be tempted of evil things. God

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.15>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.16>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.4.15>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.5.21>

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%203.5>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.3>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.4.11>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2016.33>

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.7.26>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.22.28>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.2.18>

proves, but tempts no man with evil things. This is done by the devil who works upon human lust to bring forth sin. James says that when a man is tempted, he is drawn away or dragged out by his own lust, and enticed (Gk. *deleazo*, to trap or catch with a bait). Then the lust conceives and gives birth to sin, and sin, when completed or fullgrown, brings forth death. Sin is a killer, its object, like a wild beast, is to kill the sinner who commits sin. "The foolish make a mock at guilt (or sin)" (Prov.14:9⁵³), little realizing its deadly character. We can no more safely play with sin than with a deadly serpent. Let us not be deceived, but kill the lust before it has brought forth its children.

Jas.1:17⁵⁴,18⁵⁵

Every good giving, or act of giving, and every perfect free gift, is from above (Gk. *anothen*, see Jn 3:3⁵⁶,31⁵⁷; Jn 19:11⁵⁸ etc.), coming down from the Father of lights. No doubt we have a contrast here between what is said about man and his lust and sin, in Jas.1:12-15⁵⁹, and God, the Source of all good, who is without variation in His goodness. It may be that we have here a veiled allusion to the sun, as illustrating what is said of the Father of lights. The sun is the earth's source of light and heat, without whose abundant, changeless, life-giving rays, life on this earth would quickly become impossible. Whatever change there is by

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.14.9>

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.17>

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.18>

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%203.3>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jn%203.31>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2019.11>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.12-15>

turning, and whatever variation there may be, these are caused by the earth's relation to the sun and by its turning on its axis; these result in the changes of day and night, summer and winter, etc.

Similarly, whatever changes there may be in our experiences towards God, the changes are ours, not His. We sing, "We change, He changes not." In these verses James gives us a picture of the meaning of the name Jehovah, who said of Himself by Malachi, "I Jehovah change not, therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Mal.3:6⁶⁰). It may be that the LORD used the name of Jacob in this verse to show His gracious dealings with a man who had many changes, as had also his sons. Jehovah was changeless in His goodness to them as we learn, for instance, from His giving the manna with unfailing regularity for forty years, though they on their part disobeyed, rebelled and lusted in the wilderness. As they did in the wilderness, so did they in all the years afterwards. The Lord said, "Your Father which is in heaven ... maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt.5:45⁶¹).

Paul said to the pagans of Lystra, that "the living God ... left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:15⁶², 17⁶³). This good and unchangeable God has brought us forth by a new birth, as 1 Pet.1:23-25⁶⁴ also shows, by the word of truth, the living and incorruptible

60. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mal.3.6>

61. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.5.45>

62. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2014.15>

63. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2014.17>

64. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.1.23-25>

message of the gospel, in order to be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. Here is a great honour which should make us humble and contrite before God, He having willed it in the counsels of eternity, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His earthly, human creatures.

Jas.1:19⁶⁵,20⁶⁶

Critics differ as to whether verse 19 should commence with “Ye know” or “So that,” whether the Greek word is *hoste* or *histe*. Whichever is the correct word, the following exhortations emerge from what James has written in the previous verse concerning the excellence of the goodness and changeless character of God. We cannot fail to see the wisdom in what is said. The flesh will be babbling, but a Christian man does not aspire to have a glib tongue. The quickness of the ear should ever come before the quickness of the tongue. Indeed the tongue, that restless evil, needs to be reined in like a horse (Jas.3:3⁶⁷). Paul says, “Study to be quiet” (1 Thess.4:11⁶⁸). It is a safe course to be a good listener. The tongue often leads people into trouble, the ear but seldom. “Slow to wrath” is a wise precaution. One of the qualities of an elder is “not soon angry.” The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty” “The discretion of a man maketh him

65. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.19>

66. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.20>

67. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.3.3>

68. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.4.11>

slow to anger” (Prov.16:32⁶⁹; Prov.19:11⁷⁰). Wrath or anger is one of the things that the believer is to put away (Col.3:8⁷¹).

Jas.1:21⁷²

We are to lay aside all filthiness, things squalid, sordid, dirty. Purity of conduct is required of the believer. The Lord said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt.5:8⁷³). Timothy was to be an ensample of purity (1 Tim.4:12⁷⁴). James also says, “Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; purify your hearts, ye double minded” (Jas.4:8⁷⁵). We are also to lay aside abounding, superabundant wickedness (Gk. makia, malice, a word with always a bad meaning), and to receive with meekness or gentleness the implanted (Gk. emphutos, from en, in, and phuton, a plant) word. As the word of God brought salvation to us as sinners, so the word of God when received with meekness will save our souls (lives) for God. We as saints cannot be saved without it (Heb.2:3⁷⁶).

Jas.1:22⁷⁷,23⁷⁸,24⁷⁹

69. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.16.32>

70. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.19.11>

71. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.3.8>

72. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.21>

73. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.5.%208>

74. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.4.12>

75. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.8>

76. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.2.3>

77. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.22>

78. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.23>

79. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.24>

There may be many hearers of the word, but few doers. The causes that the doers are few many be very varied, love of self, of pleasure, present profit, friendship, etc., etc. Deluding (Gk. *paralogizomai*, “to make a wrong computation, defraud by a false reckoning”) means to deceive or delude. Those who hear the word should reckon aright, as to the effect in present loss now through obedience, and of future gain. There is profit and loss both ways. The Lord propounded this matter of profit and loss to His disciples, in Matt.16:24-27⁸⁰: James says that a man who is a hearer and not a doer is like a man who, having seen himself in a mirror, forgets what he is like. We can see ourselves in the mirror of the word, both as to our perfection in Christ as God in grace has made us, and also as to what we are like through obedience or disobedience. The word of God gives a true reflection as we stand before it. Here we may learn what Paul says, in Heb.4:13⁸¹: “There is no creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

Jas.1:25⁸²

He that looketh (Gk. *parakupto*, “to stoop down towards, bend forward, particularly for examination”) into the perfect law of liberty, refers not to the law of Moses in the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life (2 Cor.3: 6⁸³): it is the spiritual meaning of the teaching of the old covenant. Note the contrast which Paul draws between the law and the gospel of

80. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.16.24-27>

81. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.4.13>

82. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.25>

83. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.3.%206>

the glory of the blessed God, in 1 Tim.1:6-11⁸⁴: The gospel condemns all forms of wrongdoing, and at the same time provides a remedy for the wrongs. The law of liberty is liberty through doing what is right, not licence to do wrong. The saving grace of God instructs us, “to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world” (age) (Tit.2:11⁸⁵,12⁸⁶). The doer receives the blessing, not the forgetful hearer. Note Rev.1:3⁸⁷, also Ps.1:1-3⁸⁸:

Jas.1:26⁸⁹,27⁹⁰

The Greek word *threskeia* (religion) is used only four times in the New Testament, in Acts 26:5⁹¹; Col.2:18⁹² (worshipping); Jas.1:26⁹³,27⁹⁴; and *threskos* (religious) once, in Jas.1:26⁹⁵: Paul calls Phariseeism religion. Dr. Young calls religion “outward religious service.” Religion may be but an outward, hollow sham, a cloke to cover mere hypocrisy and wickedness. James describes a man with an unbridled tongue and a deceived heart as one who has a vain religion. But he shows what pure religion is, to care for

84. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.1.6-11>

85. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus.2.11>

86. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Tit%202.12>

87. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.1.3>

88. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.1.1-3>

89. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.26>

90. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.27>

91. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2026.5>

92. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.2.18>

93. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.26>

94. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%201.27>

95. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.1.26>

the fatherless and widows, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. Here is a saint in the robes of a saint, and not a hypocrite in stolen garments.

COMMENTARY ON JAMES 2

Jas.2:1¹

The faith of our Lord Jesus Christ is “the Faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jud.3²). It is, as we have said before, the body of doctrine containing the will of God for His New Testament people, as the law of Moses which was commanded in Horeb was for all Israel, God’s Old Testament people (Mal.4:4³). Of old Israel was commanded, “Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty” (Lev.19:15⁴). “Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; ye shall hear the small and the great alike” (Deut.1:17⁵). God said to the remnant through Malachi, ye “have had respect of persons in the law” (Mal.2:9⁶).

Jas.2:2⁷,3⁸,4⁹

Here we have discrimination of the worst kind. David said, “Though the LORD be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly” (Ps.138: 6¹⁰). Again, the LORD blessed the man that re-

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jude.3>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mal.4.4>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev.19.15>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut.1.17>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mal.2.9>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.2>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.3>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.4>

spected not the proud (Ps.40:4¹¹). One of the beautiful events in David's life was his treatment of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, who was lame on both his feet. How he lifted up the grandson of Saul his persecutor from his poverty, and made him to sit at his table as one of his sons, will ever add lustre to the illustrious name of David, more than any of his many victories. We do well to lay to heart the words of Elihu, "Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any" (Job 36:5¹²), and also Solomon's words, "He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth; but he that hath pity on the poor, happy is he" (Prov.14:21¹³). Such words in their own Scriptures, and there are many others of like kind, would have saved the Jewish believers from acting as James outlined.

Jas.2:5¹⁴,6¹⁵,7¹⁶

It is evident, I think, that God has a special liking for the poor or He would not have chosen so many of them. Scripture speaks in many places of His care for the poor. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city" (Prov.10:15¹⁷), but the poor have no such defence, so their hope is the Lord, and in many cases the poor turn to Him for help, and such as trust in the Lord are never disappointed. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath" (Prov.11:4¹⁸),

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.138.%206>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.40.4>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%2036.5>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.14.21>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.5>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.6>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.7>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.10.15>

but the poor whose faith is in the Lord fear no day of wrath. The Lord spoke of the deceitfulness of riches, in Matt.13:22¹⁹: What kingdom is this that was promised to them that love God? There is the present kingdom of God, of which the Lord said, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Lk.12:32²⁰). This was that highly favoured place of being under the rule of God under the lordship of Christ. This favoured place of being a people governed by God was once Israel’s, but on their rejection of the Lord it was taken from them and given to another nation (Matt.21:43²¹), even to God’s New Testament people who were gathered in churches of God, forming the house of God.

It is evident that the kingdom of God is a present inheritance (1 Cor.6:9²²; Eph.5:5²³). Righteousness, doing what is right, according to God’s revealed will, is an essential feature of the kingdom of God (Matt.6:33²⁴; Rom.14:17²⁵, 18²⁶), apart from which collective service for God is impossible. But what is the kingdom of which James writes? Is it the present kingdom of God? It will be noticed that the words, “promised to them that love Him,” are used in 1:12, where the allusion is to a future reward, to

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.11.4>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.13.22>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.12.32>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.21.43>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.6.9>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.5.5>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.6.33>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.14.17>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%2014.18>

the receiving of the crown of life. I am inclined to the thought that the kingdom of verse 5 is a future kingdom, such as that of Lk.22:28-30²⁷, and also in the parable of Lk.19:11-27²⁸, when rewards will be given for faithful service. The time will come when the saints shall possess the kingdom (Dan.7:18²⁹,22³⁰,27³¹; see also Rev.2:26³²). Who were the rich that oppressed the poor? These were not the rich among the saints (though it is not impossible for rich saints to follow this course), they are the rich as a class, as distinct from the poor as a class. It was not uncommon for the rich (1) to oppress the poor, (2) to drag them before the judgement-seats, and (3) to blaspheme the Lord's name.

Jas.2:8³³,9³⁴

What a powerful corrective to all forms of misconduct is the royal law, a kingly law which reigns over and sums up all laws of conduct of man toward his fellow-man! It is a law which says that man's care for himself is to be his care for others; "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Who is my neighbour?" was the question asked by the Pharisee, and in answer the Lord spoke the parable, commonly called that of the good Samaritan, by which He showed that a man's neighbour is his fellow-man whether rich or poor, sick or otherwise. Hence the royal law is the remedy

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.22.28-30>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.19.11-27>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan.7.18>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan%207.22>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan%207.27>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.2.26>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.8>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.9>

of all ills between a man and his neighbour. It saves from the sin of having respect of persons, as Prov.14:21³⁵ also shows.

Jas.2:10³⁶,11³⁷

It does not require every link of the anchor chain to break for a ship to be at the mercy of wind and wave and to drift on the rocks. If one link breaks, it is as bad as if every link had broken. So is it with the law. Both murder and adultery were capital charges under Moses' law. If one of the statutes of the law was broken, then the law-breaker was a transgressor, and he was guilty. "The wages of sin is death," and death, even that of the Lord had to take place for the sinner to be forgiven.

Jas.2:12³⁸,13³⁹

The law of liberty is the law of Christ, who said, "For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you." Then the Lord spoke about taking the beam out of one's own eye before one seeks to remove the mote from our brother's eye (Matt.7:1-5⁴⁰). Then we have the Lord's summing up of the teaching of the whole law and the prophets as to man's behaviour towards his fellows in one sentence: "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.14.21>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.10>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.11>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.12>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.13>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.7.1-5>

the law and the prophets” (Matt.7:12⁴¹). It is truly a law of liberty, but if we act differently towards others than we act towards ourselves we are making a rod to break our own back; “for,” says James, “judgement is without mercy to him that hath no mercy.” See Matt.18:21-35⁴².

Jas.2:14⁴³

A lifeless faith which merely acquiesces to certain facts, but which does not reach the heart, a faith of the head but not of the heart, can save no one from any danger whatever, whether from hell or any other danger. Saving faith affects the whole being of the believer and he is changed in his attitude to God – “reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Rom.5:10⁴⁴). He is converted to God, and begins to move heavenward. Saving faith is a living, working faith in the heart. Thus we read of “your work of faith.” Faith comes before works, as love comes before labour, and hope before patience (1 Thess.1:3⁴⁵). Here let it be noted in this verse in James, that it is faith being shown to men, not to God. God sees and knows in whose heart faith exists, he does not need to be shown it by the believer’s works; but if we are to prove to men that we have faith, we can only show that by our works. Men cannot see into the heart where God can see. If we keep this before us in the consideration of this paragraph in James, we shall see that there is no conflict between what Paul

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.7.12>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.18.21-35>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.14>

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.5.10>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.1.3>

says in Romans about justification by faith, which is by God and before God, and justification by works which is before men.

Jas.2:15⁴⁶,16⁴⁷,17⁴⁸

The feelings of our common humanity would teach us how to act in such a case; how much more those who have faith in the living God, the supreme Provider for the need of every living thing! But if a brother should act towards a fellow-saint in such a manner as James says – “Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled,” but not at my expense, where is faith in such behaviour? James does not say that it does not exist, but that it is dead. To be dead implies that life once existed. We do not speak of stones, bricks, iron, etc., being dead, but all forms of earthly life may die, and faith may die, it may be quite inert and lifeless in itself. To men it is only evident if it have works. The Ephesians showed their faith to all the saints (Eph.1:15⁴⁹). Philemon too showed it toward the saints. This was done by the work that they did for the saints.

Jas.2:18⁵⁰,19⁵¹

Faith is an action of the heart which cannot be seen by men (Rom. 10:9⁵²,10⁵³). We only know those in whom it is by their

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.15>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.16>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.17>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.1.15>

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.18>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.19>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%2010.9>

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%2010.10>

profession and actions. How otherwise can we prove to others that we have faith? Many may believe that God is one, but their belief is no better than the belief of demons, for it produces no change and good works in them. They no more love God than demons do, who believe and shudder with fear and horror.

Jas.2:20⁵⁴

James addresses an imaginary, vain, empty man, and says that faith without or apart from works is idle; the AV/KJV says that it is dead; it is unemployed, and consequently barren of good.

Jas.2:21⁵⁵,22⁵⁶,23⁵⁷

Here we have two incidents in Abraham's life contrasted, (1) that of Gen.15⁵⁸, when he believed God that he would have a son and heir by whom he would have seed as numerous as the stars of heaven; and (2) that of Gen.22⁵⁹, when he offered up that son, in whom his seed was called, on the altar on mount Moriah. The faith of Gen.15⁶⁰ was fulfilled in the act of Gen.22⁶¹; faith first and works second. Abraham's faith in the darkness of the night when he stood alone with God was seen by no one but God, and faith is ever before God. We had not known that Abraham be-

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.20>

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.21>

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.22>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.23>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.15>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.22>

60. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.15>

61. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.22>

lieved God had He not told us. But we can see his act on Moriah when he laid his son on the altar, and by his works was faith made perfect. He was justified by faith before God, and justified by works before men. Who can doubt the faith of Abraham in the light of the works of Abraham? He who had received the promise offered up his only begotten son in obedience to God, for he believed that God would, if he offered him as a burnt offering, raise his son from the dead. Such is a living faith that shows itself in its works. Thus Abraham was called the friend of God.

Jas.2:24⁶²

“Not only by faith” are words which show that a man is justified by faith. This agrees with what Paul says in many places in the epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians. For instance, we find him saying, “We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law,” and again, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness” (Rom.3:28⁶³; Rom.4:5⁶⁴). Besides, a man is justified by his works before men.

Jas.2:25⁶⁵,26⁶⁶

62. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.24>

63. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.3.28>

64. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.4.5>

65. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.2.25>

66. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%202.26>

In Josh.2:1⁶⁷ the two men whom Joshua sent to Jericho are called “spies,” but here James calls them messengers (Gk. angelos, “one sent, messenger, angel”). This is the word that is used of the seven messengers, one from each of the churches of Asia, in Rev.1:20⁶⁸; Rev.2:1⁶⁹, etc. See also the following where angelos is used of a human messenger: Matt.11:10⁷⁰; Mk.1:2⁷¹; Lk.7:24⁷²,27⁷³; Lk.9:52⁷⁴; James views the two spies as messengers who brought to Rahab a message of salvation, and those men who brought their message to her, Rahab sent out another way. Thus her faith in the God of Israel (Josh.2:9-11⁷⁵) wrought, as Abraham’s did, with her works, and by her works was faith made perfect. She too was justified by works as well as by faith. She is amongst those envisaged in Isa.45:22⁷⁶: “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” As the spirit cannot be separated from the body without death taking place, so faith cannot live if it is separated from works. Let us think a little on the worthies of faith in Heb.11⁷⁷ and of what they did through faith. James in nowise cancels out Paul,

67. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Josh.2.1>

68. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.1.%2020>

69. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev.2.1>

70. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.11.10>

71. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark.1.2>

72. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.7.24>

73. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lk%207.27>

74. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.9.52>

75. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Josh.2.9-11>

76. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa.45.22>

77. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.11>

nor Paul James. Each describes the two sides of a circle, faith and works, faith before God and works before men.

COMMENTARY ON JAMES 3

Jas.3:1¹

Having dealt with the believer, that it is necessary for him to show to men his faith by his works, James now turns to the teacher. Paul asks, “Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” (Rom.2:21²). James warns the teachers that a greater judgement awaits them. The principle is, that to whom much is given of the same much is required. It is said of the Lord, in Acts 1:1³, that He began both to do and to teach. He was the only one who ever did all that He taught. Paul called upon the saints to imitate him as he imitated Christ. He also wrote to the Thessalonians and said, “Ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord” (1 Thess.1:6⁴). Doing should come first and teaching afterward in all who would teach others.

Jas.3:2⁵

How true it is that we stumble, stagger or fall, many times! If we remembered the Lord’s words, “And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement” (Matt.12:36⁶), we would be more conservative with our words. The spoken word cannot be recalled. If a

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.3.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.2.21>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%201.1>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.1.6>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.3.2>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.12.36>

man can bridle (put reins on) his tongue, he is able to bridle his whole body also. Such is what James calls a perfect man, a man who is complete, deficient in nothing.

Jas.3:3^{7,4}⁸

Here we have illustrations of bridling the tongue and in consequence the whole body, in the bridling of a horse and bringing the whole animal under control. This conception of control is strengthened by the use of the rudder in the steering of a ship. The ships in James's day were small things as compared with the giants that sail the oceans these days, yet the early principle of guiding a ship by the rudder is still followed and likely to be. The same principle is followed in the ships that sail across the sky as well as on the sea. This matter of control, and controlling oneself, is of very great importance.

Jas.3:5^{9,6}¹⁰

How much evil has been caused in the world through masses of men being swayed by oratory of one of their fellows! We can think of the passions of men being aroused by this means, and of wars, world-wide conflagrations, breaking out in consequence. Men's boasting with their tongues is like the small fire kindling much wood. But the tongue may cause an unholy burning in smaller spheres than amongst the nations. A child might light a fire that it would take a fire brigade to put out. "The tongue is a

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.3.3>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%203.4>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.3.5>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%203.6>

fire,” says James. It is the world of iniquity or unrighteousness set in our members. World (Gk. *kosmos*) here does not mean order, a thing of beauty, an embellishment, but rather the conception of the present world, with weakness, sin and vice, etc., the aggregate of what the world contains (see 1 Jn 2:15¹¹,16¹²).

The tongue is here viewed as something utterly bad, and, of course, signifies the tongue that is not under the control of the Spirit of God. James says that the tongue defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course or wheel of nature. The Greek word for wheel or course is *trochos* which is derived from *trecho*, to run. *Trochos* may describe a runner or a running course, anything round or circular, a wheel of any kind. The word nature is the Greek word *Genesis*, which has a variety of meanings, origin, source, beginning, birth, race, generation, etc. The course of nature may signify the course in which nature runs. It conveys to the mind that the tongue inflames or sets on fire that which is intensely vital in our being, and this that sets the course or wheel of nature on fire is itself set on fire by Gehenna.

Whilst Hell (Hades) was the abode of all the dead in past dispensations, both of the righteous and the wicked, Gehenna is the place where the wicked only will be punished in eternal fire. James sees destruction as the fire which sets on fire the tongue, which is a fire which sets on fire the course of nature. It is altogether a fearful picture. The unbridled tongues of men reek with the very stench of the pit of destruction. But David describes his

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%202.15>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Jn%202.16>

tongue as his glory (Ps.30:12¹³; Ps.57:8¹⁴). So also does Christ speak of His tongue being His glory, in Ps.16:9¹⁵.

Jas.3:7¹⁶,8¹⁷

James says that every species of creature, of beasts, birds, creeping things, and sea creatures, have been tamed (Gk. *damazo*, subdued, or restrained within limits) by the human species. Such was the ordinance of God at the beginning, when he said, "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen.1:28¹⁸). But in contrast to man's ability to control living things outside of himself, he is not able to control his own tongue, and to restrain it within proper limits. It is a restless evil. Man's other members may become weary, but not his tongue. It is as restless as the troubled sea, which continually casts up mire and dirt (Isa.57:20¹⁹). The tongue is also full of deadly poison; millions have been poisoned by it. Our sole source of pure thought is the Scriptures; there is no other.

Jas.3:9²⁰,10²¹,11²²,12²³

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.30.12>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.57.8>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.16.9>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.3.7>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%203.8>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.1.28>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa.57.20>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.3.9>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%203.10>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%203.11>

The RV gives “the Lord and Father,” which is very unusual; the AV/KJV wording is, “God, even the Father.” The contrasts drawn by James are easily understood, that out of the same mouth should not proceed blessing and cursing, even as from the same hole or opening do not pour sweet and bitter waters, or waters salt and sweet. So also men do not gather olives from a fig tree, or figs from vines. Each tree is true to its nature, but often believers are not true to their new nature, the old man is often heard speaking by the believer’s tongue. Such things ought not so to be.

Jas.3:13²⁴,14²⁵

After the many illustrations he has used James comes to grips with their application to assembly life. He addresses the wise and understanding among God’s gathered people, that they are to show by their good life (Gk. *anastrepho*, moving up and down, conduct, mode of life, frequently rendered conversation in AV/KJV) their works in meekness of wisdom. But if there is bitter jealousy (Gk. *zelos*, this word may have a good and a bad meaning according to the context in which it is found, it may mean strong affection or zeal, and also envy, jealousy) and faction (Gk. *eritheia*, this word unlike the former has no good side in the Scriptures, it is the demon of strife, it means “to do anything for gain or ambition,” to contend or dispute) in the heart, James says that they are not to boast and lie against the truth.

Jas.3:15²⁶,16²⁷

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%203.12>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.3.13>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%203.14>

This wisdom, that which is seen in jealousy and faction, is not heavenly, but earthly, sensual (Gk. *psuchikos*, soulish, animal, “swayed by the affections and passions of human nature”), devilish (Gk. *daimoniodes*, demoniacal, “pertaining to or proceeding from demons”). Where jealousy and faction are there is confusion or tumult, and every vile (Gk. *phaulos*, refuse, worthless, evil, wicked) deed.

Jas.3:17²⁸,18²⁹

The wisdom from above is pure (chaste, modest, innocent), it is also without variance (impartial), and without hypocrisy (unfeigned, real, sincere). What excellent qualities the wisdom from above has! Here the behaviour of heaven is defined for men on the earth who are moving heaven-ward and hope to be there one day. The kingdom of God in its moral characteristics is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom.14:17³⁰). If we want peace we must first do what is right. “The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and confidence for ever” (Isa.32:17³¹). “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt.5:9³²).

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.3.15>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%203.16>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.3.17>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%203.18>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.14.17>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa.32.17>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.5.9>

COMMENTARY ON JAMES 4

Jas.4:1¹,2²,3³

These verses present a sorry picture of carnality. Wars and fightings are traced to the desire of these believers for physical pleasures and lust; “pleasures that war in your members.” They were not abstaining from fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1 Pet.2:11⁴). They lusted, they killed and coveted, but could not obtain. They fought and warred, but they had not. They either ceased to pray, or they prayed and asked amiss, and if they received aught, they spent it to gratify their lust for pleasure. One could hardly visualize a worse state than what is depicted here.

Jas.4:4⁵,5⁶

In Jn 14-16 and in 1 Jn 2:15-17⁷, we have the world’s attitude to the Christian and the Christian’s attitude to the world clearly defined, and here James calls those who are friends of the world adulteresses, such as break their marriage vows, and form a lewd association. Often in the prophets the association of Israel with the nations and their gods is called adultery; Israel was frequently guilty of unlawful and lewd intercourse. Similary James views

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%204.2>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%204.3>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet.2.11>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.4>

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%204.5>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%202.15-17>

the believer's unlawful association with the world as adultery. The devil is the prince of this world (Jn 12:31⁸; Jn 14:30⁹), and the god of this age (2 Cor.4:4¹⁰), and it is impossible to walk with God and with the world. It is serious, for the world's friendship is enmity with God, and to be a friend of the world makes a believer an enemy of God. The world is guilty of the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord, hence, if the believer would be faithful to his absent and coming Lord, he must treat the world as it treated his Master. We must not be like a soldier who deserts and joins himself to the camp of the enemy.

The flesh in the believer is an ally of the world, hence the flesh must be crucified with the passions and lusts thereof. To the enemy within you cannot allow liberty of action to open the gate of the heart to the world and allow the world to walk in and pervert the affections and to turn the believer from minding heavenly things to minding earthly things. We know that the Spirit does not speak in vain to those who have ears to hear. "Spirit" in verse 5, though printed in both AV/KJV and RV "spirit", is undoubtedly the person of the Holy Spirit, and not a disposition of mind.

Jas.4:6¹¹

God gives greater grace, greater grace for greater need, for grace is given according to need (Heb.4:16¹²). The words "the scrip-

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2012.31>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John14.30>

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.4.4>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.6>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.4.16>

ture” are in italics, and consequently are not in the Greek, “He saith,” of the AV/KJV is correct. God resisteth or sets Himself against the proud (Gk. Huperephanos: huper, above, and phaino, to shine), such as would be conspicuous above or shine above all others. Such persons have no place with God. He giveth grace to the lowly, those who are not conspicuous. Such was His Son and the prophets and the apostles.

Jas.4:7¹³,8¹⁴

The saints were to be subject to God, but to stand against the devil, and if they resisted and repelled him, he would flee from them. Here is a word of encouragement both towards God and towards the devil. God said to Asa of old by Azariah, “If ye seek Him, He will be found of you” (2 Chron.15:2¹⁵). Moses also said, “What great nation is there, that hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is whensoever we call upon Him?” (Deut.4:7¹⁶, Mg.). Jeremiah said, “Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee” (Lam.3:57¹⁷). As to the matter of cleansing our hands and purifying our hearts, David said, in Ps.24:3¹⁸,4¹⁹, that those who would ascend the hill of the LORD and stand in His holy place must have clean hands and a pure heart. Asaph also said, “Surely God is good to Israel, even to such as are pure in heart” (Ps.73: 1²⁰). The Lord said, “Blessed are the

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.7>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%204.8>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Chron.15.2>

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut.4.7>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lam.3.57>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.24.3>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2024.4>

pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt.5:8²¹). If we do God’s work we must have clean hands, and if we think God’s thoughts we must have pure hearts. To be double-minded means to be two-souled, and describes one who is fickle and inconstant.

Jas.4:9²²,10²³

Eccles.3:4²⁴ says that there is a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance. In the light of the condition of those of whom James writes, as shown in the former verses, it was a time to mourn and weep, and to afflict one’s soul. Jeremiah had been called the weeping prophet, and well might he weep over the condition of God’s remnant people prior to the Babylonian captivity. The LORD said, “Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls: but they said, We will not walk therein” (Jer.6:16²⁵). Later Jeremiah said, “Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken. Give glory to the LORD your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains; and, while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD’s flock is taken captive” (Jer.13:15-17²⁶). James calls for mourning and heaviness because of the

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps.73.%201>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.5.8>

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.9>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%204.10>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eccles.3.4>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer.6.16>

condition of God's people in his day. If they humbled themselves in the Lord's sight then He would exalt them, but He could not exalt them as they were.

Jas.4:11²⁷,12²⁸

These words are like those of the Lord, in Matt.7:1-5²⁹, when He said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Again He said, "Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful. And judge not, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: release, and ye shall be released: give, and it shall be given unto you" (Lk.6:36-38³⁰). It is well to remember the incident of Aaron and Miriam when they spoke against Moses (Num.12³¹) in this matter of speaking against brethren. James says that he that speaks against his brother speaks against the law, a very serious matter, and he becomes not a doer of the law, but a judge. Paul said that it was a small matter with him to be judged of man's judgement or "man's day." He who judged him was the Lord, who would give a true judgement, having all the deep secrets of the human heart before Him. Whilst God's people are called to judge under the direction of elders, especially where there is sin in the camp, they are to cease judging one another. "He that despiseth his neighbour is void of wisdom" (Prov.11:12³²).

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer.13.%2015-17>

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.11>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%204.12>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.7.1-5>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.6.36-38>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Num.12>

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.11.12>

Jas.4:13³³,14³⁴

God's wisdom through Solomon gives guidance as to all our plans and projects: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov.3:6³⁵). Both the uncertainty of earthly things, and of life itself, should make us in all things seek the leading of God's good Spirit. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom.8:14³⁶). The future of our pilgrimage is in God's hands, not our own. Human life is but a vapour, both in its uncertainty and in its brevity. David said at the end of his remarkable and turbulent life, "Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding" (1 Chron.29:15³⁷).

Jas.4:15³⁸,16³⁹,17⁴⁰

They were saying of their own volition that they would go here and there and trade and get gain (and have no losses), instead of seeking the Lord's will in their movements and enterprises. "If the Lord will" is not to be merely a saying with us, but implies a seeking and discerning what the Lord's will is in any of our purposes and movements. If we do not know what His will is, we do well to halt, as did Ezra at the river Ahava (Ezra 8:21⁴¹), and to

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.13>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%204.14>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov.3.6>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.8.14>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Chron.29.15>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.15>

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%204.16>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%204.17>

seek of God a right way. To embark on a self-chosen way would be as foolish as for a ship to put to sea without chart or compass. Their boasting and vauntings were evil in the sight of God. Ostentation and pomp have no place with God. If they knew what was good to do and did it not, then it was sin; this is true both to them to whom it was written and to us. It is a very corrective word.

COMMENTARY ON JAMES 5

Jas.5:1¹,2²,3³

Whilst the words of James may have a general application to the rich as a class, their primary application was to the rich among God's people, whom James addresses. Though it is not an evil for any to be rich among God's people, provided that they are rich in good works (1 Tim.6:17⁴,18⁵), yet there is a danger of loving riches for their own sake. This is an evil and a danger. This was the evil James saw in the rich believers of his time. They were to weep and howl for their miseries were approaching, and would come upon them. How small a displacement of the balance of economic stability would leave many, who are esteemed rich, poor and without means of subsistence! James uses some very potent descriptions of the miseries which he saw coming. He said that their riches were putrified, and moths had destroyed the garments which they had stored.

Moths do not eat the clothes that people wear, only those that are laid aside. Rust does not corrupt silver and gold in use. The sin and lust of Pharaoh of Egypt in the past was to have great store cities and to fill them as the result of the tears and sweat of his Israelite slaves. It is this evil, in which some have more than enough and many less than enough, which fills the earth with sin

1. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.1>

2. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.2>

3. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.3>

4. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.6.17>

5. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim%206.18>

and misery. The whole of the teaching of the Scriptures is against this curse, and the Lord told His disciples where to lay up their treasures, where there are neither rust nor moths and where there are no thieves either. The Lord spoke powerfully of profit and loss, in Matt.16:24-27⁶: gain in the present, loss in the future; loss in the present, and gain in the future. Gold still glitters in the light of this world and drives some people mad, as it did Balaam of old, and Demas in the present dispensation, not to speak of Jud.as Iscariot. How paltry was the gain of each! Last days is a bad time to lay up treasures on earth.

Jas.5:4⁷

Here we have the evil work of the rich of the former verses revealed. Instead of rendering to their servants “that which is just and equal” (Col.4:1⁸), according to the command of Paul, they kept back the labourers’ hire by fraud, and what was cast into the treasury of the rich fraudulently cried out against the unlawful possessors. It should have been in the needy hands of the labourers. Though the authorities of those days, perchance, paid little heed to such injustice, the cries of the reapers came into the ears of the Lord of Hosts. He will recompense, if men do not, and well may the unjust rich weep and howl in the light of God’s just judgement. God is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed.

Jas.5:5⁹,6¹⁰

6. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.16.24-27>

7. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.4>

8. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col.4.1>

9. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.5>

Whilst others lived lives of semi-starvation by their proper wages being fraudulently kept back, the rich luxuriated in delicate living in pleasure. They nourished their hearts in a day of slaughter, for there are more ways of killing men than hitting them over the head with a bludgeon. It is not revealed who is referred to as the unresisting righteous one, who was condemned and killed, but the crime is laid by James at the door of the rich. It is not the Lord, Stephen or James, I judge, who is referred to, but some other tragedy connected, perhaps, with the fraudulent dealings of the rich with their workers.

Jas.5:7¹¹,8¹²

The husbandman here is not the Lord, but he illustrates how the Lord waits, and that we too are to be patient, and to establish our hearts, for the Lord's coming is at hand. The husbandman waits till the fruit of the earth receives the early rain to cause the seed to sprout, and the latter rain to fill the ears of the corn. It has no promise or indication that there will be Pentecostal showers of blessing at the end of the dispensation as there were at the beginning. That is not the subject that is being dealt with in the paragraph. The subject is the longsuffering of saints in view of the soon-coming of the Lord.

Jas.5:9¹³,10¹⁴,11¹⁵

10. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.6>

11. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.7>

12. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.8>

13. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.9>

14. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.10>

15. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.11>

It may be that in the words, “Murmur not ... one against another,” which means to groan or sigh, we have a reference to Job and his three friends, who “when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was great” (Job 2:12¹⁶, 13¹⁷). Is it any wonder that after such a silence Job opened his mouth and cursed the day in which he was born? (Job 3). Their words were no better than their weeping and silence, of which Job said, “To him that is ready to faint kindness should be shewed from his friend” (Job 6:14¹⁸), and later he said, “Miserable comforters are ye all” (Job 16:2¹⁹). Job said that were they in his state, “I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips should assuage your grief” (Job 16:5²⁰). They had only one idea and that was to condemn Job for his supposed wickedness which they thought was the cause of his great suffering.

Some of the greatest saints have been the greatest sufferers. Suffering is not always to be traced to the sin of the sufferer. This is proved in Job’s case. Those who suffer, the Lord pointed out, are not the greatest sinners (Lk.13:1-5²¹). Let us learn the art of comforting the afflicted. Whilst we have the end of the Lord’s

16. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%202.12>

17. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%202.13>

18. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%206.14>

19. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%2016.2>

20. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job%2016.5>

21. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke.13.1-5>

dealings with few of His prophets, Moses, David and Elijah being exceptions, and we have none of the end of the Lord's dealings with the apostles, except James, we have the end of the LORD; that is, the end of the LORD's dealings with Job. God gave to him twice as much as he had before, and an equal number of sons and daughters to whose upon whom the house fell, proving that the LORD is full of pity and merciful. In Job we have an example of patience in suffering, an example worthy of following.

Jas.5:12²²

The command of the LORD, in Lev.19:12²³, was, "Ye shall not swear by My name falsely, so that thou profane the name of thy God." There has been difference of mind about swearing, as to Matt.5:33-37²⁴, and in the verse above; some holding that what was before the Lord and James was men swearing lightly by this and that, and has nothing to do with a person taking the oath before a court or tribunal, or swearing fealty to any king or government. Clearly there was no ban on swearing under the law. The swearing, in Lev.19:12²⁵, is in connection with not stealing or dealing falsely with one another. Then in Num.30:2²⁶, when a man swore an oath and bound himself, he was not to break his word, but to do according to what he had said. Again in

22. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.12>

23. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev.19.12>

24. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.5.33-37>

25. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev.19.12>

26. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Num.30.2>

Deut.23:21²⁷,22²⁸, it was sin for any one to vow and not to perform the vow, but if there was no vow it was not sin.

The Lord cancels all swearing, as under the law, for His disciples by His word, “Swear not at all.” The Christian’s word is his bond, and anything beyond, “Yea, yea; Nay, nay,” is of the evil one. Whilst it may be argued that what is taught in these two passages has no primary application to the taking of the oath in a court of law, etc., yet I am of the opinion that the Lord’s words, “Swear not at all,” contain a guiding principle even to an oath in a court of law. We are not to swear lest we fall under judgement in not fully performing what we say. There is in Britain provision whereby a person may affirm instead of taking the oath.

Jas.5:13²⁹

Paul and Silas, in the prison in Philippi with lacerated backs and feet in the stocks, first prayed in their suffering, and later, in the upsurge of spiritual joy, they sang praises to God, and the prisoners were listening to them (Acts 16:25³⁰). If suffering saints pray long and fervently, they too may sing praises. God does not ask praise from a heavy heart, most birds do not sing in the winter; but to the afflicted He can and does give joy. Of the Thess.it is said, that they “received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess.1:6³¹).

27. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut.23.21>

28. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut%2023.22>

29. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.13>

30. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2016.25>

31. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.1.6>

Jas.5:14³²,15³³

Five things in this passage appear on the surface, (1) the sick man, (2) the church, (3) the elders of the church, (4) the prayer of faith, (5) the anointing with oil. There is one thing that does not appear on first reading, and that is, perhaps, the most important of all, the knowledge of the Lord's will, namely whether it is the Lord's will that this saint should be healed or not. For elders to go and pray over a sick saint and anoint him with oil, professedly in the name of the Lord, not knowing that it is the Lord's will to heal the person, is to act blindly. It is no prayer of faith at all. No wonder many who have acted blindly in their praying and anointing have failed in their supposed curing, and have blandly laid the blame on the sick person; a shameful thing to do. The blame lay with the would-be miracle workers. Shame on those who pretend to carry out Jas.5:14³⁴,15³⁵, and blame the sick person for their failure! It is such as carry out the praying and anointing who are the failures. It is quite erroneous for any one to say that the healing of Jas.5:14³⁶ is not miraculous healing.

Anointing with oil is twice mentioned in the New Testament, in Mk. 6:13³⁷, and Jas.5:14³⁸: The first was the work of the twelve apostles, who were sent out by the Lord with power to heal the sick and to cast out demons. "And they went out, and preached

32. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.14>

33. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.15>

34. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.14>

35. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.15>

36. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.14>

37. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark.%206.13>

38. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.14>

that men should repent. And they cast out many devils (demons), and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.” No one can deny that the events recorded in these verses were miracles. The saving or raising up of the sick in James is also miraculous. It is not that the sick man, in James, felt a little better after being anointed and prayed over, and little worse the next day, and better the following, and so on, oscillating between better and worse. It might be that because he has been anointed he adopts auto-suggestion, and seeks to convince himself by saying, “I am getting better and better and better.”

It has been well said that you may have a miracle, or no miracle, but you cannot have half a miracle. Miracles of healing and casting out of demons were wrought by the Lord in which He proved to men His Deity, and the Lord’s disciples were given power by Him to prove the divine character of their message (Jn 10:36-38³⁹; Jn 14:10⁴⁰, 11⁴¹; Jn 15:22⁴²), and when the Lord returned to heaven the working of miracles continued to prove the truth of the great salvation; “God also being witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts (distributions) of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will” (Heb.2:4⁴³). Many claim miraculous powers today whose doctrines are unscriptural and Satanic, communities of people whose doctrines differ entirely from one another. Is God, who is One and whose doctrine is one, putting His seal on all those

39. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2010.36-38>

40. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2014.10>

41. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jn%2014.11>

42. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2015.22>

43. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb.2.4>

who claim to be able to perform cures? It simply cannot be. God cannot deny the unity of His own Being and the unity of His revealed will as given in the Scriptures.

What church is referred to in Jas.5:14⁴⁴? It cannot be the Church which is Christ's Body (Eph.1:22⁴⁵,23⁴⁶), which the Lord called "My Church" (Matt.16:18⁴⁷), against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. That Church never meets and it has no elders. The most of its members are in heaven. The church James mentioned was one of the churches of God (1 Cor.1:2⁴⁸; 11:16⁴⁹; 1 Thess.2:14⁵⁰; 2 Thess.1:4⁵¹, etc.), of which there were many in the days of the apostles. Miracles were not performed because of the godliness of the apostles, consequently the power to work miracles was not lost through the ungodliness of the men who followed the apostles. Hear the words of Peter, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this man? or why fasten ye your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk?" The power which healed the lame man was the power of the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 3:6⁵²,7⁵³,16⁵⁴). Jas.5:14⁵⁵,15⁵⁶ be-

44. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.14>

45. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph.1.22>

46. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%201.23>

47. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.16.18>

48. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.1.2>

49. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor%2011.16>

50. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Thess.2.14>

51. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thess.1.4>

52. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%203.6>

53. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%203.7>

54. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%203.16>

longs to a miraculous period at the beginning of this dispensation, and such as mimic the miracles of those days will receive a mimic's reward.

Does God hear prayer for the sick? We emphatically believe He does, and He has in our experience healed the sick in answer to prayer. According to the wisdom which God has given us, we use the natural means of healing and seek God's blessing thereupon. Careful nursing has often been richly blessed of God. God has often been pleased to use the simple means used to the recovery of the sick. Even Paul, a great miracle-worker, wrote to Tim. to use a little wine for his stomach's sake and his often infirmities (1 Tim. 5:23⁵⁷); this was wine used medicinally, as we may use medicinal preparations. Till men are given that knowledge that they know that it is God's will to raise a sick person up, they will be wise to leave the oil bottle at home, when they go to visit the sick and to pray for them. If, in the time of James, sin was the cause of the sickness, then the sin would be forgiven. In this way both soul and body would then be brought into a state of well-being.

Jas. 5:16⁵⁸, 17⁵⁹, 18⁶⁰

Verse 16 does not teach us that sins, such as in 1 Jn 1, are to be confessed one to another, the intimate things which occur in the lives of believers which have to do with their communion

55. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.14>

56. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.15>

57. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.5.23>

58. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.16>

59. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.17>

60. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.18>

with God. The sins that have to be confessed to one another are such faults and offences which have been committed by saints between themselves, which have affected communion between themselves, and, in consequence, their communion with God. These should be confessed to one another and prayer made for each other. And where sickness has been in consequence of these sins, through confession and prayer the sick person will be healed. Then we are told of the effectiveness of prayer of a person who is righteous and right with God. Elijah is held up as an example as showing what is meant by the prayer of faith.

Could any sincere and righteous Israelite have prayed for God to send no rain on the land, and then again for Him to send rain, and God would have hearkened to him? We judge not. What are we to learn from Elijah's prayer? It is this, that we must first learn what the will of God is, and then to pray according to His will (1 Jn 3:19-22⁶¹; 4:14⁶²,15⁶³). Elijah the prophet was one who claimed to stand before God (1 Kgs.17:1⁶⁴), but he was not at liberty to pray against Israel, because he thought that they should be punished for their wrong doing (1 Kgs.19:9⁶⁵,10⁶⁶,13⁶⁷,14⁶⁸; Rom.11:2⁶⁹,3⁷⁰).

61. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%203.19-22>

62. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Jn%204.14>

63. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Jn%204.15>

64. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Kings.17.1>

65. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Kings.19.9>

66. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Kgs%2019.10>

67. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Kgs%2019.13>

68. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Kgs%2019.14>

69. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.11.2>

His prayers had to be according to the will of God. Hence it was that God revealed to him that there would not be dew or rain for years upon Israel, and he prayed for the fulfilment of God's word. Then God revealed to him His will as to sending rain at the end of three years and a half of drought, and He again prayed for the fulfilment of God's word. We see him in prayer on Carmel, bowed down upon the earth, with his face between his knees. The rain came according to the word of the LORD and Elijah's prayer. It is quite possible by not knowing God's will that we ask amiss (Jas.4:3⁷¹). Elijah's prayer was the prayer of faith, prayer as the result of divine revelation, for where there has been no revelation there can be no faith.

Jas.5:19⁷²,20⁷³

It is better to read the passage – “If any among you is seduced from the truth, and one convert him”; this is a most profitable and desirable work. What is said here about recovering the erring is like what is said in 1 Jn 5:16⁷⁴: “If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death.” If a sinning brother goes on in his way of error, then death, spiritual death, will be the result, but if he is converted by someone then he will be saved from death, and a multitude of sins which would have been committed will be covered or concealed (Gk. kalupto, to hide, conceal, or to prevent, but not to cover in the sense of atone for).

70. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%2011.3>

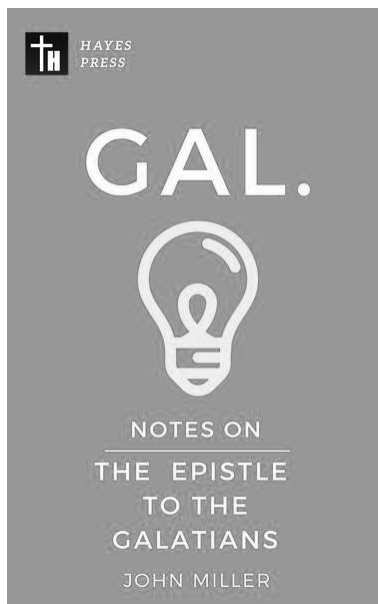
71. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.4.3>

72. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James.5.19>

73. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jas%205.20>

74. <https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%205.16>

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