

James 1:1

THE ARGUMENT

That the authority of this Epistle hath been questioned by some anciently, appears plainly by Eusebius and Jerome, who speak suspiciously of it; and that it hath been denied by some more lately, is no less clear (to say nothing of Cajetan and Erasmus) in Luther, who (though in his after-writings he was more modest) at first spoke slightly of it; and some of his more early followers were of his mind. But as for the ancients, (admitting the two forementioned authors wrote their own sense, and not, as some think, and their words cited by Brochmand and others may well import, the opinion of other men), why should not this Epistle, being unquestionably received by most of the fathers and primitive Christians before Eusebius or Jerome were born, and many councils, be more effectual to prove its being canonical, than the doubts of a few to persuade us to the contrary? What do we find in it disagreeable to the doctrine of the gospel, unbecoming the style of an apostle, or the Holy Ghost's inditing? Hath it not the same majesty, purity, spirituality, efficacy, and power on men's consciences, that other Scriptures have? To Cajetan and Erasmus we oppose the universality, not only of protestants, but of papists themselves; and to Luther all the modern Lutherans, who now generally receive it. That which drew Luther himself to reject it (to speak a little of that as being of weight) was, partly the seeming difference between James and Paul in the point of justification, which will be spoken to in Jas 2:1-26; and partly his speaking nothing (though he wrote to Christians) of the death, or merits, or resurrection of Christ, &c. Whereas, indeed, though he is more sparing in handling evangelical doctrines, yet several he toucheth upon: what doth he mean but the gospel of Christ by *the ingrafted word*, Jas 1:21, and *law of liberty*, Jas 1:25? And who doth he understand by *the judge*, Jas 5:9, but Christ? And whose coming doth he speak of, Jas 1:7, but Christ's? And how expressly doth he mention *the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ!* Jas 2:1. But the truth is, the persons for whom this Epistle seems designed, and the scope of the writer, call for such a way of writing, as here we have. He bends himself mainly against a licentious, sensual sort of professors, who boasted of the name of faith, but wanted the thing, and (being rather libertines than saints) blemished the Christian profession with unsuitable practice. These he takes upon him to correct, and evinceth their faith and religion (being barren of good works) to be vain. It was not

therefore necessary he should so largely insist upon the doctrine of faith, when his chief design was to reform manners. Paul having many times to do with men of Pharisaical spirits, or such as were difficultly weaned from Judaism, and an opinion of self-righteousness, makes it his business to settle the doctrine of grace, and justification by faith; and why may not James, having to do with those who (probably, and as Austin thinks, misunderstanding Paul) abused the doctrine of grace, and turned it into an occasion of licentiousness, be allowed to tax that abuse, and insist the more fully on matters of practice, and press them to live up to their faith, and bring forth fruits answerable to that holy truth they had received? Remedies must be suited to diseases: there is as little need to urge a Solifidian to rely on grace of which he already presumes, as to persuade a Pharisee of the necessity of good works, upon which of himself he lays but too much stress.

But as the authority of this Epistle hath been questioned formerly, though with little reason, so the penman of it is still doubted of, perhaps with more. However, this question is less material; we need not be over solicitous to know what amanuensis the Spirit of God made use of in penning it, so long as we find the impress of God upon it. It is certain that this James was not the son of Zebedee, whom Herod had beheaded (if chronology fail not) before the writing of this Epistle, Ac 12:1. It is not certain that there were three Jameses, two of them apostles, and the third (called Oblias, and James the Just) one of the seventy disciples; the Scripture mentioning but two, one the son of Zebedee, the other of Alpheus, called *the brother of the Lord*, Ga 1:19, as being of kin to his family; and said to be a *pillar*, Ga 2:9, and joined with Peter and John. And though some have thought the James there mentioned to have been the third James, called Oblias, and one of the seventy; yet it is more probable that he was indeed no other than the son of Alpheus, and one of the twelve: nor is it likely, that one of the disciples should be numbered as one of the three *pillars*, and therein preferred above so many apostles. This James, therefore, upon the whole, I take to be the penman of this Epistle; and his not calling himself an apostle, need not be objected against his being so, when he doth no more in omitting it than Paul doth in four of his Epistles, viz. to the Philippians, both to the Thessalonians, and that to Philemon.

Why this Epistle is called *general* is much questioned, and a satisfactory

reason not easily given. Some think, because it is not inscribed to any particular church or person, as Paul's are. But then why are the two latter Epistles of John reckoned among the catholic or general ones, though directed to particular persons, and that to the Hebrews not counted among them, though it have no such particular inscription? Others think, that this and the six other were called catholic, upon their catholic or general reception and approbation among the churches, in opposition to the Epistles of Barnabas, Ignatius, Clemens, &c., which never were received as any part of the canon. These are the best reasons of this title I meet with; which is the more probable, let the reader judge.

The matter of this Epistle is, in a manner, wholly practical, but very various; though chiefly, either corrective of the vices and abuses which had crept into the conversations of professors; or monitory and hortatory, partly to awaken the drowsy among them out of their stupidity and security, and stir them up to the practice of their neglected duty, (to which he points them particularly, by minding them of approaching judgment), and partly to persuade sincere and humble believers to patience under tribulations and oppressions, by propounding unto them suitable encouragements for their support and consolation in such a condition. Many excellent and useful truths are promiscuously laid down throughout the whole, which cannot easily be reduced to any certain method, but will be severally spoken to in the respective places where they occur.

Chapter Summary

Jas 1:1 The apostle's address to the dispersed Jews.

Jas 1:2-4 He recommendeth patience and joy in afflictions.

Jas 1:5-8 and prayer with faith.

Jas 1:9-11 He giveth advice to the poor and to the rich.

Jas 1:12 The reward of those that are proof under trial.

Jas 1:13-16 Our own lusts, and not God, tempt us to sin.

Jas 1:17,18 God is the unchangeable author of all good to his creatures.

Jas 1:19-25 We must receive the word with purity and meekness, and not only hear, but do it.

Jas 1:26 The necessity of governing the tongue.
Jas 1:27 The essential duties of true religion.

Ver. 1. *James*, the son of Alpheus and brother of Jude, called likewise *the brother of the Lord*, Ga 1:19.

A servant; not only by creation, as all the creatures are, Ps 119:91, or by redemption, as all believers are, but by special commission in the office of an apostle; see Ga 1:10 Php 1:1 2Pe 1:1; compare likewise Ro 1:9.

Of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ: the members of this clause may be taken, either jointly, and then the conjunction *and* hath the power only of an explication, q. d. The servant of God, *even* the Lord Jesus Christ, as Tit 2:2 and the sense must be, the servant of Jesus Christ, who is God: or, separately, (which our translation seems to favour), to let his countrymen know, that in serving Christ he served the God of his fathers; and by the authority both of God and of Christ wrote this to them.

To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: being one of the apostles of the circumcision, Ga 2:9, he writes to all his believing countrymen wherever dispersed, as they were upon several occasions, and at several times, into divers countries, Ac 2:9-11.

Greeting; a salutation usual, not only among the heathen, but the Jews, Mt 26:49 27:29; and used by the Christians, Ac 15:23. It seems to answer to the Hebrew salutation, *peace*, which was comprehensive of all happiness; and so is this here to be understood.

James 1:2

Ver. 2. *My brethren*; both as being of the same nation and the same religion; so he calls them, that the kindness of his compellation might sweeten his exhortations.

Count it; esteem it so by a spiritual judgment, though the flesh judge otherwise.

All joy; matter of the chiefest joy, viz. spiritual. So *all* is taken, 1Ti 1:15.

When ye fall into; when ye are so beset and circumvented by them, that there is no escaping them, but they come upon you, though by the directeth of God's providence, yet not by your own seeking.

Divers temptations; so he calls afflictions, from God's end in them, which is to try and discover what is in men, and whether they will cleave to him or not. The Jews were hated by other nations, and the Christian Jews even by their own, and therefore were exposed to divers afflictions, and of divers kinds, 1Pe 1:6.

James 1:3

Ver. 3. *Knowing this;* considering.

That the trying of your faith; the reason why he called afflictions temptations, as well as why believers should count it all joy to fall into them, viz. because they are trials of their faith, and such trials as tend to approbation, as the word (different from that in the former verse) imports.

Of your faith; both of the truth of the grace itself, and of your constancy in the profession of it.

Worketh patience; not of itself, but as a means in the hand of God, made effectual to that end.

Objection. Ro 5:3, it is said, *Tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience,* or trial; whereas here it is said, that trial works patience.

Answer. The words used here and Ro 5:3 are different; here it is δοκιμιον, which signifies actively, the trying itself, and this works patience; there it is δοκιμη, which is taken passively, for the experiment following upon the trial; or, as we read it, the experience, viz. of our sincerity, as well as of God's consolation, which may well be the effect of patience wrought by and under trials. And so both are true, that tribulation, as Paul speaks, and trial, as James, work patience; and patience, not a further trial, but rather discovery, or experiment, or approbation of what we are, which appears by nothing more than by patience under sufferings.

James 1:4

Ver. 4. *But let patience have her perfect work;* i.e. effect:

q. d. Let it have its full efficacy in you, both in making you absolutely subject to God's will, and constant to the end under all your sufferings.

That ye may be perfect and entire; that you may grow perfect in this grace, as well as in others, and have the image of Christ (to whom ye are to be conformed) completed in you.

Wanting nothing; either not failing, not fainting in trials, or not defective in any thing which is a needful part of Christianity.

James 1:5

Ver. 5. *If any of you lack wisdom; if,* doth not imply a doubt, but supposeth something which they themselves would grant; viz. that they did lack wisdom, either in whole or in part. It is as if he had said, Since, or seeing, ye lack, &c. See the like, Mal 1:6. Though this hold true of wisdom taken more generally, yet wisdom here is to be restrained, according to the circumstances of the text, and taken for wisdom or skill to bear afflictions so as to rejoice in them.

Let him ask of God; by believing, fervent prayer.

That giveth to all men; either to all sorts of men, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, &c., or to all that so ask, as appears by the next verse.

Liberally; or simply, Ro 12:8, i.e. with an open, free, large heart, in opposition to the contracted, narrow spirits of covetous misers. Our translation renders it well *liberally*; and so the word is used, 2Co 8:2 9:13.

And upbraideth not; doth not twit them with their importunity, or frequency in asking, (as men often do), however he may upbraid them with their unthankfulness for, or abuse of, what they have received.

And it shall be given him: see Mt 7:7,8 Joh 16:23. The promise is here added to encourage faith in asking.

James 1:6

Ver. 6. *But let him ask in faith;* with confidence of God's hearing, grounded on the Divine attributes and promises, Mr 11:24 1Jo 5:14.

Nothing wavering; either not disputing God's power or promise; or rather, not doubting, not slandering *through unbelief*, Ro 4:20), where the same Greek word is used: so Ac 10:20, *nothing doubting;* and Mr 11:23, where it is opposed to believing.

For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed: this notes either the emptiness and unprofitableness of faithless prayer, when men's minds are thus at uncertainties, tossed to and fro; the confidence they sometimes seem to have, like waves, falls down and fails, and their prayers come to nothing: or, the disquiet and torment distrust works in the minds of such waverers, which are never settled till faith come and fix them, Isa 57:20.

James 1:7

Ver. 7. *For let not that man;* he that wavers, in opposition to him that asks in faith: all doubting doth not hinder the hearing of prayer, but that which excludes faith, Mr 9:23,24.

Think; vainly conceit, or persuade himself.

That he shall receive any thing of the Lord; even the least mercy, much less the wisdom mentioned.

James 1:8

Ver. 8. *A double minded man;* either;

1. A hypocrite, who is said to have a double heart, Ps 12:2. Or rather;
2. He that is of a doubtful mind, wavering, and fluctuating with contrary motions, sometimes of one mind, sometimes of another; sometimes hoping, sometimes desponding.

Is unstable; either unconstant, without any fixedness or consistency of spirit, as ready to depart from God as to cleave to him; or unquiet, troubled, full of inward tumults.

In all his ways; by a Hebraism, *ways*, for counsels, purposes, actions, &c.

James 1:9

Ver. 9. *Let the brother;* i.e. the believer, (for to such he writes), all believers, or saints, being brethren in Christ, 1Co 16:20 1Th 5:26 1Ti 6:2.

Of low degree; the Greek word signifies both lowliness of mind and lowness of condition, (as the Hebrew word doth, to which it answers), but here is to be understood of the latter, (as Lu 1:48), but especially of such a low estate as a man is brought into for Christ's sake and the gospel's.

Rejoice in that he is exalted; either exalted to be a brother, a member of Christ, a child of God, and heir of glory, which is the greatest preferment; or exalted to the honour of suffering for Christ: see Ac 5:41 Ro 5:3.

James 1:10

Ver. 10. *But the rich;* viz. brother, he that is in a high, honourable, or plentiful condition in the world.

In that he is made low; supply from the former verse, let him rejoice in that he is made low; not as to his outward state, (for he is supposed to be rich still), but his inward disposition and frame of mind, God having given him a lowly heart in a high condition, and thereby prepared him for the cross, though as yet he be not under it.

Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away: the reason why the rich brother should be humble in his greatest abundance, viz. because of the uncertainty of his enjoying what at present he possesseth; he is neither secure of his life, nor his wealth; he and his enjoyments pass away, and his pomp vanisheth as easily as the flower of the grass, which fades as soon as it flourisheth.

James 1:11

Ver. 11. *With a burning heat;* or, the scorching east wind, which in those countries was wont to rise with the sun, Jon 4:8.

So also shall the rich man fade away; either *shall* is here put for *may*, the future tense for the potential mood; and then the apostle doth not so much declare what always certainly shall be, as what easily may be, and frequently is, the prosperity of rich men not being always of so short continuance. Or, *shall* may be taken properly, as we read it; and then his is a general proposition, showing the mutable nature and short continuance of rich men and their riches, whose longest life is but short, and death, when it comes, strips them of their enjoyments: and though this frailty be common to all, yet he speaks of the rich especially, because they are so apt to hear themselves high upon their wealth, and put confidence in it, 1Ti 6:17.

In his ways; either in his journeyings and travels for his riches, or rather in his counsels, purposes, actions, Ps 146:4.

James 1:12

Ver. 12. *Blessed is the man that endureth;* holds out against the assaults and impressions of temptations with patience and constancy, Jas 5:11 Heb 12:5,7.

Temptations; afflictions, as Jas 1:2.

For when he is tried; approved, and found upon the trial to be sound in the faith: a metaphor taken from metals tried by fire, and found pure.

He shall receive the crown of life; so the heavenly glory is called, Re 2:10, either because it is not to be had but in eternal life, or because of its duration and not fading away, 1Pe 5:4.

Which the Lord hath promised: this shows on what ground it is to be expected, viz. on the account of the promise, and how sure we may be of it.

To them that love him; i.e. all true believers, whose faith, and thereby title to the crown, is evidenced by love, which is the fulfilling of the law.

Objection. Why not, promised to them that suffer for Christ, of whom he here speaks?

Answer. That is implied, for none have him more, or evidence their love to him more, than they, that suffer for him.

James 1:13

Ver. 13. *Let no man say;* neither with his mouth, nor so much as in his heart, blasphemously cast the blame of his sins upon God, to clear himself.

When he is tempted; so stirred up to sin as to be drawn to it.

I am tempted of God; either solicited by God to sin, or enforced to it.

For God cannot be tempted with evil; cannot be drawn aside to any thing that is unrighteous, by any motion from within, or impression from without.

Neither tempteth he any man; doth no way seduce or enforce to sin, so as to be justly chargeable as the author of it.

Objection. God is said to be tempted, Ex 17:2,7 De 6:16 Ps 78:41; and to tempt, Ge 22:1 De 8:2 13:3.

Answer. Both are to be understood of temptations of exploration, or for the

discovery of something that was before hidden. Men tempt God, that they may know what he will do; God tempts men, that they (not he, for he knows it already) may know what themselves will do, which then appears, when the temptation draws it out; but neither is to be understood of the temptation here spoken of, viz. of seduction, or drawing into sin. God tempts by giving hard commands, Ge 22:1; by afflicting, as in Job's case; by letting loose Satan or other wicked instruments to tempt, 1Ki 22:22; by withholding his grace and deserting men, 1Sa 28:15; by presenting occasions which corruption within improves unto sin, and by ordering and governing the evil wills of men, as that a thief should steal out of this flock rather than that, that Nebuchadnezzar should come against Jerusalem rather than Rabbah, Eze 21:21,22. But God doth not tempt by commanding, suggesting, soliciting, or persuading to sin.

James 1:14

Ver. 14. He shows the great cause of sin; that Iust hath a greater hand in it than either the devil or his instruments, who cannot make us sin without ourselves: they sometimes tempt, and do not prevail; but when lust tempts, it always prevails, either in whole or in part, it being a degree of sin to be our own tempters.

Drawn away; either this notes a degree of sin, the heart's being drawn off from God; or the way whereby lust brings into sin, viz. the impetuosity and violence of its motions in us.

Of his own lust; original corruption in its whole latitude, though chiefly with respect to the appetitive faculties.

And enticed; either a further degree of sin, *enticed* by the pleasantness of the object, as represented by our own corruption; or another way of lust's working in us to sin, viz. by the delightfulness and pleasure of its motions: in the former it works by a kind of force, in this by flattery and deceit. It is either a metaphor taken from a fish enticed by a bait, and drawn after it, or rather from a harlot drawing a young man out of the right way, and alluring him with the bait of pleasure to commit folly with her.

James 1:15

Ver. 15. *Then when lust hath conceived;* lust (compared to a harlot) may be said to conceive, when the heart is pleased with the motion, and yields some consent to it.

It bringeth forth sin; the birth of sin may be the complete consent of the will to it, or the outward act of it.

And sin; actual sin, the fruit and product of original.

When it is finished; sin is finished, when it is not only committed, but continued in, as the way and course of a man's life.

Bringeth forth death; not only temporal, but eternal. Or we may thus take the order and progress of sin: the first indeliberate motion of lust, is the temptation or bait, which by its pleasantness enticeth, and by its vehemency draws the heart after it (as the harlot, Pr 7:21, with the flattering of her lips forced the young man, telling him of the pleasure he should enjoy, Jas 1:14,16-18, and then he goes after her, Jas 1:22); the heart's lingering about and being entangled with the delightful motion of lust, is its committing folly with it; when the full consent is joined, lust hath conceived; when the outward act is performed, sin is brought forth; and when sin is finished in a settled course, it brings forth death; which, though every sin do in the merit of it, yet sin only finished doth in the event.

Objection. Doth not this imply lust, and its first motions, not to be sin?

Answer. No: for;

1. The least motions of it are forbidden, Mt 5:28 Ro 7:7.
2. It is contrary to the law and Spirit of God, Ro 7:23,25 Ga 5:16,17.
3. It is the fountain of impurity, and therefore is itself impure, Job 14:4 Mt 7:15,16 Jas 3:11.
4. Evil thoughts defile a man, Mt 15:19 Ac 8:22.

Objection. How is lust said here to bring forth sin, when, Ro 7:8, sin is said to work lust?

Answer. James calls the corrupt principle itself *lust*, and the actings of it, *sin*; whereas Paul calls the same principle *sin*, and the actings of it *lust*. And so both are true, lust, as a root, brings forth the acts of sin as its fruits; and sin as a root, brings forth actual lusts, as its fruits.

James 1:16

Ver. 16. Viz. in imputing your sins to God, and saying, that when you are tempted you are tempted of him.

James 1:17

Ver. 17. *Every good gift*; Greek, giving; and so it may be distinct from *gift* in the next clause; to show, that whereas men sometimes give good gifts in all evil way, and with an evil mind, God's giving, as well as gift, is always good; and therefore when we receive any thing of him, we should look not only to the thing itself, but to his bounty and goodness in giving it. Or, it may be rendered as our translators do, *gift*, and so the word is sometimes used by profane writer's themselves; and then, though it may be implied, that all good gifts, and of all kinds, of nature and of grace, are from God, yet the apostle's design in this place being to prove that God is not the author of sin, *good gifts* may most fairly be understood the best gifts, those of grace, (spiritual blessings, Eph 1:3), such being contrary to sin, and destructive of it, in one of which he instanceth, viz. regeneration, Jas 1:18.

And every perfect gift; the highest degree of good gifts, those that perfect us most; to intimate, that all the parts and steps of spiritual life, from the first beginning of grace in regeneration to the consummation of it in glory, are of God.

Is from above; i.e. from heaven, Joh 3:27,31; and heaven is put for God that dwells there, Lu 15:21.

And cometh down from the Father; the Creator, Author, or First Cause, as Heb 12:9; it is spoken after the manner of the Hebrews: see Ge 4:20,21.

Of lights; God is the author of all perfection, and so of corporeal light; but here we are to understand spiritual light, the light of knowledge, faith, holiness, as opposed to the darkness of ignorance, unbelief, sin; of which he cannot be the author.

With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning: he here sets forth God as essentially and immutably good, and the Father of lights, by allusion to the sun, the fountain of corporeal light, and makes use of terms borrowed from astronomy. The sun, though it scattereth its beams every where, yet is not without its changes, parallaxes, and diversities of aspects, not only sometimes clear and sometimes eclipsed, but one while in the east, another in the south, then in the west; nor without its turnings in its annual course from tropic to tropic, (to which the Greek word here used seems to allude), its various accesses and recesses, by reason of which it casts different shadows: but God is always the same, like himself, constant in the emanations of his goodness, without casting any dark shadow of evil, which might infer a change in him.

James 1:18

Ver. 18. *Of his own will;* out of his mere good pleasure, as the original cause, and not moved to it by any dignity or merit in us, Eph 1:9 2Ti 1:9.

Begat he us; by a spiritual generation, whereby we are new born, and are made partakers of a Divine nature, Joh 1:13 1Pe 1:3,23.

With the word of truth; i.e. the word of the gospel, as the instrument or means whereby we are regenerated: why it is called *the word of truth*, see Eph 1:13.

That we should be a kind of first-fruits; i.e. most excellent creatures, being singled out and separated from the rest, and consecrated to God, as under the law the first-fruits were, Re 14:4.

Of his creatures; viz. reasonable creatures; the word creature being

elsewhere restrained to men: see Mr 16:15 Col 1:15.

James 1:19

Ver. 19. *Let every man be swift to hear;* prompt and ready to hear God speaking in *the word of truth*, before mentioned.

Slow to speak; either silently and submissively hear the word, or speak not rashly and precipitately of the things of faith, but be well furnished yourselves with spiritual knowledge, ere you take upon you to teach others.

Slow to wrath; either, be not angry at the word, or the dispensers of it, though it come close to your consciences, and discover your secret sins; the word is salt, do not quarrel if it make your sores smart, being it will keep them from festering; or, be not angrily prejudiced against those that dissent from you.

For the wrath of man: that anger which is merely human, and generally sinful, inordinate passion and carnal zeal.

Worketh not the righteousness of God; will not accomplish the ends of the word in you, viz. to work that righteousness which in the word God prescribes you. But here is withal a meiosis in the words, less being spoken than is intended; it is implied therefore, that the wrath of man hinders the operation of the word, and disposeth to that unrighteousness which is forbidden by it.

James 1:21

Ver. 21. *Wherefore lay apart;* not only restrain it, and keep it in; but put off, and throw it away as a filthy rag, Isa 30:22: see Eph 4:22 Col 3:8 1Pe 2:1.

All, of every kind.

Filthiness; or, sordidness; a metaphor borrowed from the filth of the body, 1Pe 3:21, and thence transferred to the soul; and it here seems to imply, not only sensuality or covetousness, but all sorts of lusts, whereby men are defiled, 2Co 7:1 2Pe 2:20.

And superfluity of naughtiness; i.e. that naughtiness which is superfluous. That is said to be superfluous or redundant, which is more than should be in a thing; in which respect all sin is superfluous in the soul, as being that which should not be in it: and so this intimates that we are not only to lay apart more gross pollutions, but all the lusts of the flesh, and relics of old Adam, as being all superfluities which may well be spared, or excrements, (as some render the word, agreeably to the former metaphor), which should be cast away.

And receive; not only into your heads by knowledge, but into your hearts by faith.

With meekness; with humility, modesty, and gentleness, which makes men submissive to the truth of the word, and ready to learn of God even those things which are above their natural capacity, Ps 25:9 Isa 66:2 Mt 11:5,27: this is opposed to wrath, which makes men unteachable.

The ingrafted word; either which is ingrafted or implanted, viz. ministerially, by the preachers of the gospel, 1Co 3:6,7; principally by the Spirit of God, who writes it in the heart, Jer 31:33. And thus it may be taken particularly for the word of the gospel, in opposition to the law, which came to men's ears from without, and admonished them of their duty, but was not written in their hearts, or ingrafted thereto from them unto obedience to it. Or, that it may be ingrafted, i.e. intimately united to, or rooted in, the heart by a vital union; or made natural to it, (as some render the word), the heart being transformed by the power of it, and conformed to the precepts of it, 2Co 3:18 Ro 6:17.

Which, viz. when received by faith, *is able to save*, instrumentally, as being the means wherein God puts forth his power in saving them, Re 1:16.

Your souls; yourselves; the soul, as the noblest part, is by a synecdoche put for the whole person: see 1Pe 1:9.

James 1:22

Ver. 22. *But be ye doers of the word;* the same as doers of *the work*, Jas 1:25, namely, which the word prescribes; q. d. Receive the word by faith into your hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in your lives: see Lu 11:28 Joh 13:17.

And not hearers only; not contenting yourselves with a bare hearing the word, though it have no influence upon you.

Deceiving your own selves; playing the sophisters with, or putting a fallacy upon, yourselves; particularly, persuading yourselves into a good opinion of your state, merely because of your being hearers of the word, Mt 7:21.

James 1:23

Ver. 23. *He is like unto a man:* the Greek word here used, properly signifies the sex, not the species, but is indifferently used by this apostle with the other, as Jas 1:12,20, so that by a man looking at his face in a glass, is meant any man or woman.

Beholding his natural face; or, the face of his nativity, by a Hebraism, for natural face, as we translate it; i.e. his own face, that which nature gave him, or he was born with.

In a glass; the word is here compared to a looking-glass: as the glass represents to us the features and complexions of our faces, whether beautiful or deformed; so the word shows us the true face of our souls, the beauty of God's image when restored to them, and the spots of sin which so greatly disfigure them.

James 1:24

Ver. 24. The remembrance of what his face is vanisheth as soon as his eye

is off the glass; he remembers not the spots he saw in his face, to wipe them off. So he that sees the blemishes of his soul in the glass of the word, and doth not remember them to do them away, looks in that glass (i.e. hears the word) in vain.

James 1:25

Ver. 25. *But whose looketh into;* viz. intently and earnestly, searching diligently into the mind of God. The word signifies a bowing down of the head to look into a thing; and is used of the disciples' looking into Christ's sepulchre, Lu 24:12 Joh 20:5; see 1Pe 1:12; and seems to be opposed to looking into a glass, which is more slight, and without such prying and inquisitiveness.

The perfect law of liberty; the whole doctrine of the Scripture, or especially the gospel, called *law*, Ro 3:27, both as it is a rule, and by reason of the power it hath over the heart; and a *law of liberty*, because it shows the way to the best liberty, freedom from sin, the bondage of the ceremonial law, the rigour of the moral, and from the wrath of God; and likewise the way of serving God freely and ingenuously as children; and because, being received into the heart, it is accompanied with the Spirit of adoption who works this liberty, 2Co 3:17. It is called a perfect law, not only as being entire and without any defect, but as directing us to the greatest perfection, full conformity to God, and enjoyment of him, 2Ti 3:16,17.

And continueth therein; perseveres in the study, belief, and obedience of this doctrine, (Ps 1:2), in all conditions, and under all temptations and afflictions. This seems to be opposed to him, who, when he hath looked in a glass, goes away, Jas 1:24. By which are set forth slight, superficial hearers, who do not continue in Christ's word, Joh 8:31.

He being not a forgetful hearer; Greek, hearer of forgetfulness, by a Hebraism, for a forgetful hearer; it answers to him in the former verse, that forgetteth what manner of man he was; and implies, not only not remembering the truths we have heard, but a not practising them, as appears by the next clause.

But a doer of the work; viz. which the word directs him to do: the singular number is put for the plural; he means, he that reduceth what he hears into practice, Ps 103:18.

This man shall be blessed in his deed; this is opposed to bare hearing, and the doer of the work is said to be blessed in or by his deed, as the evidence of his present begun blessedness, and the way to his future perfect happiness.

James 1:26

Ver. 26. *If any man among you seem to be religious;* seems to others, or rather to himself; thinks himself religious, because cause of his hearing and outward worship: thus the word rendered *seems* is often taken, 1Co 3:18 8:2 14:37 Ga 6:3. Here he shows who are not doers of the work, as in the next verse, who are.

And bridleth not his tongue; restrains it not from the common vices of the tongue, reviling, railing, censuring, &c.

But deceiveth his own heart; either deceiveth his own heart in thinking himself religious, when indulging himself in things so contrary to religion, or deceiveth his own heart, being blinded with self-love, and lifted up with self-conceit, which is the cause of his censuring and speaking evil of others.

This man's religion is vain; empty, and to no purpose, having no reality in itself, and bringing no benefit to him.

James 1:27

Ver. 27. *Pure religion;* true, sincere, genuine, Mt 5:8 Joh 15:3.

And undefiled; this seems to reflect upon the hypocritical Jews, whose religion consisted so much in external observances, and keeping themselves from ceremonial defilements, when yet they were sullied with so many moral ones, Jas 1:14 Mt 23:23 Joh 18:28; devoured widows'

houses. They thought their religion pure and undefiled; the apostle shows here which is really so *before God*; in the sight of God, and according to his judgment.

God and the Father; i.e. God who is the Father, *and* being only explicative, as Eph 1:3 5:20: yet this title may be given here to God with respect to what follows, and to show that such acts of charity are acceptable to him that is called the *the Judge of widows, and the Father of the fatherless*, Ps 68:5.

To visit; this includes all other acts of charity to them, comforting, counselling, relieving them, &c.

The fatherless and widows; he doth not exclude others from being the objects of our charity and compassion, but instanceth in *fatherless and widows*, as being usually most miserable, because destitute of those relations which might be most helpful to them; and possibly in those times persecution might increase the number of widows and orphans.

In their affliction; when they had most need; lest any should think it sufficient to visit them that were rich, or in a prosperous condition.

And to keep himself unspotted from the world; untainted by the evil example of men in the world, and free from the lusts of the world, moral pollutions. The apostle doth not here define religion but only instanceth in these two things, good works and holiness of conversation, as testimonies and arguments of the truth of it.

James 2:1

Chapter Summary

Jas 2:1-9 It is not agreeable to the Christian profession to regard the rich, and despise the poor.

Jas 2:10-12 The guilt of any one breach of the law.

Jas 2:13 The obligation to mercy.

Jas 2:14-19 Faith without works is dead.

Jas 2:20-26 We are justified, as Abraham and Rahab were, by works, and not by faith only.

Ver. 1. *Have not*; profess not yourselves, and regard not, or esteem not in others.

The faith of our Lord Jesus Christ; i.e. faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; not the author but the object of faith is meant, as Ga 2:20 Ga 3:22 Php 3:9.

The Lord of glory; *Lord* not being in the Greek, *glory* may be joined with *faith*, (admitting only a trajection in the words, so frequent in the sacred writers), and then the words will run thus, the faith of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, i.e. the faith of his being glorified, which by a synecdoche may be put for the whole work of redemption wrought by him, which was completed by his glorification, as the last part of it; or, by a Hebraism, the faith of the glory, may be for the glorious faith. But the plainest way of reading the words is (as our translators do) by supplying the word *Lord* just before mentioned; *Lord of glory*, (Christ being elsewhere so called, 1Co 2:8), i.e. the glorious Lord; as the Father is called *the Father of glory*, Eph 1:17, i.e. the glorious Father: and then it may be an argument to second what the apostle is speaking of; Christ being the Lord of glory, a relation to him by faith puts an honour upon believers, though poor and despicable in the world; and therefore they are not to be contemned.

With respect of persons; the word rendered *persons* signifies the face or countenance, and synecdochically the whole person; and, by consequence, all those parts or qualities we take notice of in the person. To respect a person is sometimes taken in a good sense, Ge 19:21 1Sa 25:35. Mostly in an evil, when either the person is opposed to the cause, we give more or less to a man upon the account of something we see in him which is altogether foreign to his cause, Le 19:15, or when we accept one with injury to or contempt of another. To have, then, the faith of Christ with respect of persons, is to esteem the professors of religion, not for their faith, or relation to Christ, but according to their worldly condition, their being great or mean, rich or poor; this the apostle taxeth in the Hebrews to whom he wrote, that whereas in the things of God all believers are equal, they respected the greater and richer sort of professors, because great or rich; so as to despise those that were poor or low. The Greek hath the word plurally, respects, which may intimate the several ways of respecting persons, in judgment or out, of judgment. This doth not exclude the civil

respect we owe to magistrates and superiors upon the account of their places or gifts; but only a respecting men in the things of religion upon such accounts as are extrinsical to religion; or, with prejudice to others as considerable in religion as themselves, though inferior to them in the world.

James 2:2

Ver. 2. *For if there come unto your assembly;* either church assemblies for worship, Heb 10:25; and in these we find some respect of men's persons, which may here be blamed: see 1Co 11:20-22. Or their assemblies for disposing church offices, and deciding church controversies, &c.; for he speaks of such respecting men's persons as is condemned by the law, Jas 2:9, which was especially in judgment.

A man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel; the usual ensigns of honourable or rich persons, Ge 38:18,25 41:42 Lu 15:22 16:19.

And there come in also a poor man; the word signifies one very poor, even to beggarliness.

In vile raiment; filthy and sordid, Zec 3:3,4, the sign of extreme poverty.

James 2:3

Ver. 3. *And ye have respect to him;* Greek, look upon, viz. with respect and veneration, or a care and concern to please him.

Sit thou here in a good place; an honourable place, either contrary to the usual orders of the churches, according to which, (as some say) the elder sat in chairs, the next to them on benches; and the novices on the pavement at their feet; the apostle taxing their carnal partiality in disposing these places to the people as rich, not as Christians; or it may note their disposing church offices to them that were rich, or favouring them in their causes rather than the poor.

Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool; the meanest places, and

belonging to the youngest disciples: both are expressions of contempt.

James 2:4

Ver. 4. *Are ye not then partial in yourselves?* Either, are ye not judged in yourselves, convicted by your own consciences of partiality, and accepting men's persons? Or, have ye not made a difference? viz. out of a corrupt affection rather than a right judgment; and then it falls in with our translation; *Are ye not partial?* The Greek word is used in this sense, Ac 15:9 Jude 1:22.

And are become judges of evil thoughts; i.e. judges that have evil thoughts, or are evil affected: q. d. You evidence the corruptness of your affections by your thus perversely judging.

James 2:5

Ver. 5. *Hath not God chosen the poor?* Not that God hath chosen all the poor in the world, but his choice is chiefly of them, 1Co 1:26,28. Poor he means in the things *of this world*, and in the esteem of worldly men; they are opposed to those that Paul calls *rich in this world*, 1Ti 6:17,18.

Rich: some insert the verb substantive to be between this and the former clause, and read: Hath not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich, &c. So Ro 8:29, *predestinate to be conformed:* the like defective speeches we find, Joh 12:46 2Co 3:6. And the verb understood here is expressed, Eph 1:4, after the same word we have in this text. And yet if we read the words as they stand in our translation, they do not prove that foresight of faith is previous to election, any more than that being heirs of the kingdom is so too.

In faith; either in the greatness and abundance of their faith, Mt 15:28 Ro 4:20; or rather, rich in those privileges and hopes to which by faith they have a title.

And heirs of the kingdom; an instance of their being rich, in that they are to inherit a kingdom.

Which he hath promised to them that love him: see Jas 1:12, where the same words occur, only that which is here a kingdom, is there a crown.

James 2:6

Ver. 6. *But ye have despised the poor;* God's poor, viz. by your respecting persons.

Do not rich men? Either those that were unbelieving Jews or heathen; or such as made a profession of Christianity, but were not cordial friends to it; or, both may be included.

Oppress you; insolently abuse you, and unrighteously, either usurping a power over you which belongs not to them, or abusing the power they have.

And draw you before the judgment-seats; especially before unbelieving judges, 1Co 6:1,6: they would colour their oppression with a pretence of law, and therefore drew the poor saints before the judgment-seat.

James 2:7

Ver. 7. *Do not they blaspheme?* If the rich here spoken of were Christians, then they may be said to blaspheme Christ's name, when by their wicked carriage they caused it to be blasphemed by others, unbelievers, among whom they were, Ro 2:24 Tit 2:5, &c.; 1Ti 6:1: but if rich unbelievers be here meant, the rich men of those times being generally great enemies to Christianity; he would from thence show how mean a consideration riches were, to incline the professors of religion to such partiality as he taxeth them for.

That worthy name; or, good or honourable (as good place, Jas 2:3, for honourable) name of Christ; they blaspheme what they should adore.

By the which ye are called; or, which is called upon you, either, which was called upon over you, when you were baptized into it; or rather it is a

Hebrew phrase, and, implies no more than (as we read it) their being called by it, as children are after their fathers, and wives after their husbands, Ge 48:16 Isa 4:1; for so God's people are called by his name, De 28:10 Eph 3:15.

James 2:8

Ver. 8. *If ye fulfil;* or, perfect; the word signifies to accomplish perfectly, but no more is meant by it than sincerity in observing the duties of the law in an indifferent respect to one as well as another, which he seems to oppose to their partiality in the law, by respecting some and neglecting others.

The royal law; either the law of God the great King, or Christ the King of saints; or rather, *the royal law* is the king's law, i.e. the great law which is the same to all, rich and poor, the common rule by which all are to act, as, *the king's way*, Nu 21:22, i.e. the great plain way in which all are to travel. Here may likewise be a tacit reflection on the servile disposition of these accepters of men's persons, evil becoming them that pretended to be governed by the royal law, which was to be observed with a more free and king-like spirit.

According to the Scripture: see Mt 22:39 Ga 5:14.

Ye do well; ye are not to be blamed, but commended. The apostle seems here to answer an objection they might make in their own defence; that in the respect they gave to rich men, they did but act according to the law which commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves: to this he replies partly in this verse by way of concession, or on supposition; that if the respect they gave to rich men were indeed in obedience to the law of charity, which commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves, then they did well, and he found no fault with them; but the contrary he shows in the next verse.

James 2:9

Ver. 9. *But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin;* the second part of

the apostle's answer, in which he sets *persons* in opposition to *neighbour*: q. d. If you, instead of loving your neighbour, which excludes no sort of men, poor no more than rich, choose and single out (as ye do) only some few (viz. rich men) to whom ye give respect, despising others, ye are so far from fulfilling the royal law, that ye sin against it.

And are convinced of the law; either by the particular law against respecting persons, Le 19:15, or rather, by that very law you urge; your thus partially respecting the rich to the excluding of the poor, being so contrary to the command of loving your neighbour, which excludes none.

As transgressors; i.e. to be transgressors, viz. of the whole law, as fellows.

James 2:10

Ver. 10. *For whosoever shall keep*: this is not an assertion, that any man doth keep the whole law so as to offend but in one point, but a supposition that if, or admitting, such a one were.

The whole law; all the rest of the law, that one point only of the whole being excepted.

And yet offend in one point; slip, or trip, or stumble at; it seems to signify the least failing in any point of the law.

He is guilty of all; guilty of the breach, and obnoxious to the punishment, of all; not distributively, or separately, as if he transgressed every precept distinctly; but:

1. Conjunctively or copulatively; he is guilty of not keeping the whole law, though not of breaking each particular command; he breaks the whole law, though not the whole of the law: as he that wounds a man's arm wounds the whole man, though not the whole of the man; he that breaks one link breaks the whole chain, and he that fails in one musical note spoils the whole harmony.
2. He sins against charity, which is the sum of the law, and upon which all

the commands depend; and so though he keep most of them, as to the substance, yet he keeps none of them in a right manner, because none out of love, which should be the principle out of which he observes all of them.

3. He sins against the authority of the whole law, which is the same in every command.
4. He is liable to the same punishment, though not the same degree of it, as if he had broken all the commandments, Ga 3:1; and his keeping most, cannot exempt him from the punishment due for the breach of that one. This he speaks either in opposition to the Pharisees among the Jews, who thought themselves righteous if they kept most of the law, though in some things they came short; or rather, against hypocrites among Christians, who would pick and choose duties, obey some commands and neglect others; whereas no obedience to God is right, but that which is impartial, and respects all the commands, Ps 119:6 Mt 5:19.

James 2:11

Ver. 11. All proof of what he laid down in the former verse, by instancing in these two commands, there being the same reason of all the rest, the same sovereignty and righteousness of God appearing in them, and it being the will of God to try our obedience in one as well as another.

Thou art become a transgressor of the law; viz. by contemning the authority and holiness of God, which appears in the whole law, and every command of it.

James 2:12

Ver. 12. *So speak ye, and so do:* the apostle concluding his discourse about respecting persons, which consisted both in their words and actions, be directs them how to govern themselves in both.

As they that shall be judged; viz. for both your words and actions, and that, not only in your own consciences at present, but at God's tribunal

hereafter.

By the law of liberty; the gospel, of the liberty of which it is one branch, that these differences among men, of Jew and Gentile, bond and free, circumcised and uncircumcised, &c., are taken away, Ac 10:28 Ga 3:28 Col 3:11; against this law of liberty you sin if you respect persons, and then may well fear to be judged by it; as it takes away differences of persons now, so it will make none at last, but will be as impartial in its judgment as it is in its commands.

James 2:13

Ver. 13. *For he shall have judgment without mercy;* shall be judged according to the rigour of the law, by pure justice without any mixture of mercy.

That hath showed no mercy; that hath been cruel and unmerciful to his neighbour here.

And mercy rejoiceth against judgment; either,

1. The mercy of God rejoiceth and glorieth over judgment, being as it were superior and victorious in relation to those that show mercy, to whom the promise of obtaining. mercy is made, Mt 5:7. Or rather:
2. The mercy of men, i.e. of those that deal mercifully with others; their mercy having the mercy and promise of God on its side, need not fear, but rather may rejoice, and as it were glory against judgment, as not being like to go against them.

Objection. Is not this to make some ground of glorying to be in men themselves, contrary to Ps 143:2 Ro 4:2?

Answer. Mercy in believers is an evidence of their interest in God's mercy, which prevails on their belief against his justice; and so its rejoicing against judgment, is not against it as overcome by itself, but by God's mercy. Thus both senses are included.

James 2:14

Ver. 14. *What doth it profit;* viz. as to his eternal salvation? Wherein are the ends of religion promoted by it? The apostle had just before declared, that they who are unmerciful to men shall find God severe to themselves, and have judgment without mercy: but hypocritical professors boasted of their faith as sufficient to secure them against that judgment, though they neglected the practice of holiness and righteousness. Hence he seems to take occasion for the following discourse, to beat down their vain boasting of an empty, unfruitful faith, and possibly, lest they should abuse or misunderstand what he had said about *the law of liberty*, as if that inferred a licence of sinning, and living as they pleased.

Though a man say; whether boastingly with his mouth to others, or flatteringly in his heart to himself. The apostle doth not say, that a man's having faith simply is unprofitable, but either that faith he pretends to without works, or his boasting he hath faith, when the contrary is evident by his not having works.

He hath faith; such as he pretends to be good, and sound, and saving, but is really empty and dead, Jas 2:26, and unfruitful.

And have not works; i.e. good works, such as are not only acts of charity, to which the papists would restrain it, but all the fruits of righteousness and holiness proceeding from faith, and appearing both in heart and life.

Can faith save him? The interrogation is a vehement negation; q. d. It cannot save him, viz. such a faith as a man may have (as well as boast he hath) without works. This James calls *faith* only by way of concession for the present, though it be but equivocally called faith, and no more really so, than the carcass of a man is a man.

James 2:15

Ver. 15. *If a brother or sister;* a Christian man or woman, who are frequently thus called: see 1Co 7:12,15.

Be naked; badly clothed, or destitute of such clothing as is fit for them, Job 22:6 1Co 4:11.

And destitute of daily food: see Mt 6:11; that which is necessary for the sustaining of life a day to an end. Under these two of nakedness and hunger, he comprehends all the calamities of human life, which may be relieved by the help of others; as food and raiment contain all the ordinary supports and comforts of life, Ge 28:20 Mt 6:25 1Ti 6:8.

James 2:16

Ver. 16. *Depart in peace;* a usual form of salutation, wherein, under the name of peace, they wished all prosperity and happiness to them they greeted, Mr 5:34 Lu 7:50 8:48.

Be ye warmed; i.e. be ye clothed; the warmth here mentioned being such as is procured by clothes, Job 31:20.

And be ye filled, or, satisfied with food; a metaphor from the fattening of cattle with grass or hay. The same word is used, Mt 14:20 Mr 6:42 Php 4:12. These two good wishes answer the two former great wants.

Notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; understand, when yet ye are able to relieve them; for he speaks to the rich, or such as were in a capacity of being helpful to others.

What doth it profit? Either, what do your good words and charitable wishes profit them, without charitable deeds? Or, what do they profit yourselves? Or both may be included: as your fair speeches convey no real good to them, so they bring in no reward to you from God.

James 2:17

Ver. 17. *Even so faith;* that which they boasted of, and called faith.

Is dead; void of that life, in which the very essence of faith consists, and which always discovers itself in vital actings and good fruits, where it is

not hindered by some forcible impediment; in allusion to a corpse, which plainly appears to have no vital principle in it, all vital operations being ceased. It resembles a man's body, and is called so, but in reality is not so, but a dead carcass.

Being alone; margin, by itself, or in itself; be it what it will, it is but dead: or, as we render it, *being alone*, i.e. not in conjunction with works, which always it should be.

James 2:18

Ver. 18. *A man;* any true believer.

May say; to any such boasting hypocrite.

Thou hast faith; thou pretendest to have faith, or admit thou hast faith; and an historical faith he might have, as Jas 2:19.

And I have works: I do not boast of my faith; or, to say nothing of my faith, yet works I do profess to have.

Show me thy faith without thy works: there are two readings of these words, but in both the sense agrees with the rest of the apostle's discourse. If we take the marginal reading, show me thy faith by thy works, the sense is, evidence the faith thou pretendest to by thy works, as the fruits of it; let thy actions vouch for thy profession. But if we take the reading in the text, *without thy works*, it is a kind of ironical expression; q. d. Make it appear by convincing arguments that thou hast true faith, when yet thou wantest works, the only argument of the truth of it. Understand here, but this thou canst not.

And I will show thee my faith by my works; I will easily prove my faith to be true and genuine, by those good works it brings forth in me. Demonstrate the cause to me without the effect, if thou canst; but I will easily demonstrate the cause by the effect, and prove the root of faith to be in me, by my bringing forth that fruit which is proper to it. It cannot hence be inferred, that wherever such works are, as men count and call good, there must needs be faith: the apostle's meaning only is, that wherever true

faith is, there good works will certainly be.

James 2:19

Ver. 19. *Thou believest that there is one God;* thou givest thy assent to this truth, that there is one God. This may likewise imply other articles of the creed, to which the like assent may be given.

Thou doest well; either this kind of faith hath its goodness, though it be not saving; or ironically, q. d. A great matter thou dost, when thou goest almost as high as the devils.

The devils also believe; yield the like assent to the same truth.

And tremble: the word signifies extreme fear and horror, viz. such as the thoughts of their Judge strike into them. This shows the faith the apostle speaks of in this place, not to be the faith of God's elect, which begets in believers a holy confidence in God, and frees them from slavish fears; whereas the faith here spoken of, if it have any effect upon men, it is but to fill them with horror.

James 2:20

Ver. 20. *But wilt thou know?* Either this question is in order to teaching, as Joh 13:12 Ro 13:3; and then the sense is: If thou hast a mind to know, I shall instruct thee: or, it is a teaching by way of question, as more emphatical and pressing; and then it is as if he had said, Know, O vain man.

O vain man; an allusion to an empty vessel, which sounds more than one that is full. The carnal professor to whom he speaks is vain, because empty of true faith and good works, though full of noise and boasting.

Objection. Doth not the apostle sin against Christ's command, Mt 5:22?

Answer.

1. He speaks not of any particular man, but to all in general, of such a sort, viz. who boasted of their faith, and yet did not evidence it by their works.
2. It is not spoken in rash anger, or by way of contempt, but by way of correction and just reproof; see the like spoken by Christ himself, Mt 23:17,19 Lu 24:25 and by Paul, Ga 3:1 1Co 15:36.

That faith without works is dead; a defective speech, *faith without works*, for that that which is without works, or, faith, if it be without works. He doth not say, faith is dead without works, lest it should be thought that works were the cause of the life of faith; but *faith without works is dead*, as Jas 2:17,26; implying, that works are the effects and signs of the life of faith.

James 2:21

Ver. 21. *Was not Abraham our father;* not only the father of us as Jews, (for to them he wrote), and according to the flesh, but as believers, and according to the promise; so all believers are called Abraham's children, Ro 4:11 Ga 3:7.

Justified by works; found or declared to be justified, not only before God, but in the face of the world; and his faith (by which he had been justified above thirty years before in the sight of God) now approved as a true, lively, justifying faith, by this proof he gave of it, upon God's trying him in the offering up his son, Ge 22:9,12, *Now I know that thou fearest God*, &c. Abraham did fear God, and believe him before, and was justified before in the sight of God; but by the working of his faith in so eminent an act of obedience, the sincerity of all his graces, and so of his faith, was manifested and made known, and so his faith itself justified, as his person was before, and he obtained this ample testimony from the mouth of God himself. So that Abraham's justification here was not the absolution of a sinner; but the solemn approbation of a believer; not a justifying him as ungodly, but commending him for his godliness. He was by his works justified as a righteous person, but not made righteous, or constituted in a justified state, by his works. The design of the apostle is not to show how sinners are justified in God's court, but only what kind of faith it is

whereby they are justified, viz. such a one as purifies the heart, Ac 15:9, and looks to Christ, not only as made righteousness, but sanctification to them, 1Co 1:30; and consequently not only rests on him for justification, but stirs them up to yield obedience to him.

When he had offered Isaac his son; viz. in his firm purpose and resolution, and was about to do it actually, had not God hindered him. It was no fault in Abraham that it was not actually done, and therefore it was counted to him as if it had been really done, Ge 22:12 Heb 11:17.

Upon the altar; this shows the settled purpose of Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, when he proceeded so far as to bind him, and lay him upon the altar; for that argues, that he expected and intended nothing but his death, which generally was wont to follow in sacrifices when once laid upon the altar.

James 2:22

Ver. 22. *Seest thou how faith wrought with his works?* He doth not say, works wrought with his faith, as he should have said, if he had intended their concurrence in justification; but *faith wrought with his works*, i.e. his faith was not idle, but effectual in producing good works, it being the office and business of faith to respect Christ for sanctification, as well as righteousness, Ac 26:18.

And by works was faith made perfect; either:

1. Faith by producing good works is itself encouraged, heightened, improved; and so not made perfect by any communication of the perfection of works to it, but by being stirred up and exercised as to the internal strength and power of it. Or rather:
2. Faith is made perfect by works declaratively, inasmuch as works evidence and manifest the perfection and strength of faith.

Faith is the cause, and works are the effects; but the cause is not perfected by the effect, only its perfection is demonstrated by it, as good fruit doth not make a tree good, but show that it is so. See 2Co 12:9.

James 2:23

Ver. 23. *And the Scripture was fulfilled;* this illustrious instance of Abraham's obedience did so clearly evidence the sincerity of his faith, that it did most plainly appear, that what the Scripture said of him, it spoke most truly, viz. that he did indeed believe God, *and it was counted to him for righteousness.* Things are said to be fulfilled when they are most clearly manifested. As those words, Ps 2:7: *This day have I begotten thee,* are said to be fulfilled at Christ's resurrection, Ac 13:32,33; not that he was then first begotten of the Father, but that he was then in a glorious manner declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead, Ro 1:4. So here Abraham's offering up his son being the evident discovery of his faith, it did by that appear, that the Scripture report of him was true, that he *believed God,* &c.: he did believe before, and his faith was imputed to him before, but it was never so fully made known, as by this so high an act of obedience.

It was imputed unto him for righteousness; viz. as apprehending Christ in the promise. Faith is said to be imputed for righteousness, Ro 4:3-6, as being the instrument or means of applying Christ's righteousness, by which elsewhere we are said to be justified, Ro 3:24,25 5:19 2Co 5:21 Php 3:9.

And he was called the Friend of God; either he was *the friend of God;* to be called, sometimes times implies as much as to be, Isa 48:8; or properly, he was called, 2Ch 20:7 Isa 41:8; and that not only on the account of God's frequent appearances to him, conversing with him, revealing secrets to him, Ge 18:17,18 Joh 15:15, and entering into covenant with him; but especially his renewing the covenant with him upon the sacrificing of his son, and confirming it by oath, and thereby, as it were, admitting him into a nearer degree of friendship, Ge 22:16, &c.

James 2:24

Ver. 24. *Ye see then;* an inference either from the instance of Abraham, or from the whole preceding discourse.

How that by works; works of new obedience.

A man is justified; declared to be righteous, or approved as such, and acquitted from the guilt of hypocrisy.

And not by faith only; not by a mere profession of faith, or a bare assent to the truth, without the fruit of good works.

Question. How doth this general conclusion follow from the particular case of Abraham?

Answer. Abraham's faith and justification, both before God and the world, are set forth as the exemplars of ours, to which the faith and justification of all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, is to be conformed, Ro 4:11,12,23,24.

Question. Doth not James here contradict Paul's doctrine in the matter of justification, Ro 4:1-25?

Answer. The contradiction is but seeming, not real, as will appear, if four things be considered:

1. The occasion of these apostles' writing, and their scope in it. Having to do with different sorts of persons, they had likewise different designs. As Christ speaks one way when he dealt with proud Pharisees, whom he would humble; another way, when with humble hearers, whom he would encourage. and Paul carried it one way when among weak brethren, in condescension to whose infirmities he circumcised Timothy, Ac 16:2,3; and another, when he was among false brethren, and men of contention, who opposed Christian liberty, seeking to bring believers into bondage, and then would not suffer Titus to be circumcised, Ga 2:3-5. So in the present affair. Paul's business lay with false apostles and Judaizing Christians, such as did, in the matter of justification, either substitute a self-righteousness instead of God's grace, or set it up in conjunction with it; and therefore his scope is (especially in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians) to show the true cause and manner of justification, and vindicate the freeness of grace in it, by the exclusion of man's works, of what kind soever; to which purpose he propounds the examples of Abraham and David, in their

justification, Ro 4:1-1-25. Whereas James having to do with carnal professors, and such as abused the doctrine of grace to encourage themselves in sin, and thought it sufficient that they had faith, (such as it was), though they did not live like believers, resting in an empty profession, with the neglect of holiness; his design plainly is, to show the effects and fruits of justification, viz. holiness and good works; thereby to check the vanity and folly of them who did thus divorce faith from a holy life, (which God hath joined to it), and fancied themselves safe in the profession of the one, without any respect to, or care of, the other, as appears in this chapter, Jas 2:14,17,26. And because they might bear themselves high in this false confidence by the example of Abraham, their father according to the flesh, and whom Paul had set forth, Ro 4:1-25, as justified by faith, without the concurrence of works to his justification; James makes use of the same example of Abraham, as one eminent for holiness as well as faith, and who made his faith famous by the highest act of obedience that ever a saint did, to show, that faith and holiness ought not to be separated; Abraham's faith being so highly commended, especially as productive of it. To the same purpose he makes use of the instance of Rahab, who, though a young saint, and newly come to the knowledge of God, yet showed the truth of her faith by so considerable an exercise of her love and mercy to God's people, as her receiving the spies in peace was. This therefore helps not a little to reconcile the difference between these two apostles. Paul deals with those that magnified works too much, as if they were justified by them, and slighted faith and grace; and therefore, though he frequently shows the usefulness of faith and good works unto salvation, and presseth men every where to the practice of them, yet he proves that they have no interest in the justification of a sinner before God's tribunal, which he asserts to be wholly and solely of grace, and by faith. But James, in dealing with loose Christians, who magnified faith, and slighted good works, not only as having no influence on justification, but as not necessary at all to salvation; he takes upon him to maintain good works, not as necessary to justification, but as the effects, signs, and evidences of it, and such as without which their faith was vain, and themselves in an unjustified state.

2. Paul and James take faith in different senses: Paul speaks of a true, lively faith, which purifies the heart, and *worketh by love*, Ga 5:6. Whereas James speaks of a profession, or presumption of faith, barren,

and destitute of good fruits, such a faith as is dead, Jas 2:17, such as the devils may have, Jas 2:19, which is but historical, and consists only in a belief of God's being, not a consent to his offer, or relying on his promises. What contradiction then is there here between these two apostles, if Paul assert justification to be by faith, viz. a lively, working faith; and James deny it to be by faith, viz. an idle, inactive, barren faith, and which hath only the name, but not the nature of that grace, and is rather the image of faith than faith itself?

3. But because James not only denies justification to the faith he speaks of, but ascribes it to works in this verse; therefore it is to be considered, that justification is taken one way by him, and another by Paul. Paul takes it for the absolution and acceptation of a sinner at God's bar, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which is the primary and proper notion of justification. But James takes it for the manifestation and declaration of that justification; and the word is taken in the like sense in other scriptures: Lu 7:29, the people *justified God*, i.e. owned and declared his righteousness by confession of their sins, and submission to John's baptism; and Lu 7:35, *Wisdom is justified*, i.e. declared to be just and right. Ro 3:4, *justified in thy sayings*, i.e. acknowledged and declared to be true in thy word. And what is Christ's being *justified in the Spirit*, 1Ti 3:16, but his being *declared to be the Son of God*? Ro 1:4. And that James takes justification in this sense, appears:

(1.) By the history of Abraham here mentioned: he was (as hath been said) justified by faith long before his offering up his son, Ge 15:1-21, but here is said to be justified, i.e. declared and proved to be so, by this testimony which he gave to the truth of his faith, and consequently to his justification by it; and the Lord therefore tells him, Ge 22:12, *Now I know that thou fearest God*, &c.; q. d. By this obedience thou hast abundantly showed the sincerity of thy graces.

(2.) Because if James doth not here speak of Abraham's being justified declaratively, how can it be true which he speaks, Jas 2:23, that *the Scripture was fulfilled* (in his sacrificing his son) *which saith, He believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness*? For if James intends justification in the proper sense, how was Abraham's being justified by works a fulfilling of the Scripture, which asserts

him to be justified by faith? Here therefore again there is no contradiction between these apostles. For it is true, that Abraham was justified, i.e. accepted of God, and absolved from guilt, by faith only; and it is as true, that he was justified, i.e. manifested and declared to be a believer, and a justified person, by his works.

4. Lastly, we may distinguish of the person that is said to be justified; either he is a sinner, in the state of nature; or a believer, in a state of grace; whence ariseth the two-fold justification here mentioned. The justification of a sinner, in the remission of his sins through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and acquitting him from the condemnation of the law, is the justification properly so called, and which Paul speaks so much of; and this is by faith only. The justification of a believer, is his absolution from condemnation by the gospel, and the charge of infidelity, or hypocrisy, and is no other than that declarative justification James speaks of, or an asserting and clearing up the truth and reality of the former justification, which is done by good works, as the signs and fruits of the faith, by which that former is obtained: and this is but improperly called justification. The former is an absolution from the general charge of sin, this from the special charge of hypocrisy, or infidelity. A sinner's great fear (when first awakened to a sense of his sin and misery) is of a holy law, and a righteous Judge ready to condemn him for the violation of that law; and so his first business is to look to Christ by faith for righteousness, and remission of sin. But when he is justified by that righteousness, men may charge him with hypocrisy or unbelief, and so may the devil and conscience too, when faith is weak, or a temptation strong; and therefore his next work is to clear himself of this imputation, and to evidence the truth and reality of his faith and justification in God's sight, which must be done by producing his obedience and good works, as the indications of his faith; and hereby he proves that he hath indeed closed with the promise of the gospel, and so is clear of the charge of not believing it, which was false; as well as (by consequence) is justified from the charge of sin against the law, which was true. To conclude, therefore, here is no opposition between Paul and James. Paul speaks of Abraham's being justified as a sinner, and properly, and so by faith only; James speaks of his being justified as a believer, improperly, and so by works; by which not his person was justified, but rather his faith declared to be justifying: nor he constituted righteous, but

approved as righteous. In a word, what God hath joined must not be divided, and what he hath divided must not be joined. He hath separated faith and works in the business of justification, and therefore we must not join them in it, as Paul disputes; and he hath joined them in the lives of justified persons, and there we must not separate them, as James teaches. Paul assures us they have not a co-efficiency in justification itself; and James assures us they may, and ought to have, a co-existence in them that are justified. If the reader desire further satisfaction yet, let him consult Turretine de Concordia Pauli et Jacobi, where he may find much more to the same purpose as hath been here said.

James 2:25

Ver. 25. This instance of *Rahab* is joined to that of Abraham, either to show, that none of any condition, degree, or nation, was ever numbered among true believers, without good works; or else to prove, that faith, wherever it is sincere and genuine, is likewise operative and fruitful, not only in older disciples and stronger, such as Abraham was, but even proportionably in those that are weaker, and but newly converted to the faith, which was Rahab's case.

The harlot; really and properly so, Jos 2:1 Heb 11:31; though possibly she might keep an inn, and that might occasion the spies' going to her house, not knowing her to be one of so scandalous a life; which yet the Holy Ghost takes special notice of, that by the infamousness of her former conversation, the grace of God in her conversion might be more conspicuous.

Justified by works; in the same sense as Abraham was, i.e. declared to be righteous, and her sincerity approved in the face of the congregation of Israel, when, upon her hiding the spies, God gave a commandment to save her alive, though the rest of her people were to be destroyed.

When she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way: her receiving them implies likewise her hiding them; both which, together with her sending them forth another way, were acts of love to the people of God, of mercy to the spies, and of great self-denial in respect of her own safety, which she hazarded by thus exposing herself to the fury of

the king of Jericho and her countrymen; but all proceeded from her faith in the God of Israel, of whose great works she had heard, and whom she had now taken to be her God, and under whose wings she was now come to trust.

James 2:26

Ver. 26. *The spirit:* this may be understood either, according to the marginal reading, of the breath; and then the sense is, that life and breath being inseparable companions, as the the of breath argues want of life in the body, so, lively faith and works being as inseparable, want of works argues want of life in faith: or, according to the reading in the text, *spirit*, taking it for that substance which animates the body, and is the cause of vital functions in it, which is sometimes called spirit, Ps 31:5 Ec 12:7 1Co 2:11; and then the sense is, that as a body is without a soul, so faith is without works, i.e. both are dead. As a body without the soul hath the shape and lineaments of a man, but nothing that may discover life in it; so faith without works may be like true faith, have some resemblance of it, but hath nothing to discover the truth and life of it.

So faith; not true faith, for that cannot be dead, but an empty profession of faith, which is rather called faith by way of concession, or because of some likeness it hath to it, than really is so; as a dead body, though called a body, is really but a carcass.

James 3:1

Chapter Summary

Jas 3:1 We must not rashly take upon ourselves to reprove others.

Jas 3:2-12 The importance, difficulty, and duty of governing the tongue.

Jas 3:13-18 True wisdom will show itself in meekness, peaceableness, and charity, in opposition to strife and envying.

Ver. 1. *Be not many masters;* let not every man make himself a master of other men's faith and manners, a censor, or supercilious reprover of their failings and infirmities, Mt 7:1. All reproof is not here forbidden, neither authoritative by church officers, nor charitable by private brethren; but that which is irregular, either in the ground of it, when that is false; or the manner of it, when it is masterly and imperious, or preposterous, as when we reprehend others and are no less reprehensible ourselves, Ro 2:21; or in the end of it, when we seek to advance our own reputation by observing or aggravating others' faults, &c.

Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation; by how much the more severe and rigid we are in judging others, the greater will be our judgment, not only from men, who will be apt to retaliate, but from God himself, Mt 7:1-3 Lu 6:38 Re 2:2,3. See the like expression, Mt 23:8,14.

James 3:2

Ver. 2. *For in many things we offend all:* there is no man absolutely free from sin, 1Ki 8:46 Job 14:4 Pr 20:9 Ec 7:20 1Jo 1:8,10; and therefore we must not be too critical in other men's actions, having so many failings ourselves, Ga 6:1.

If any man offend not in word; know how to govern his tongue aright, speak what, and when; as he ought.

The same is a perfect man; either sincere, in opposition to the hypocrisy of those that pretend so great zeal in correcting others, when they are alike or more guilty themselves: or rather, we may understand it comparatively, and with respect to others, of one that hath made good proficiency in religion, and is of greater attainments than others: see 1Co 2:6.

And able also to bridle the whole body; to govern all the other parts, (eyes, ears, hands, &c.,) as to those actions which are performed by them. No member of the body being more ready to offend than the tongue, he that can rule that, may rule all else.

James 3:3

Ver. 3. He illustrates the former proposition, that he that can rule his tongue may rule his whole body, by two similitudes: the first, of an unruly horse, which yet, as wanton as he is, being curbed in with a bit, may be easily managed; intimating, that even so, if a man's tongue be well governed, the rest of the man will be under command.

James 3:4

Ver. 4. The other similitude, in which a man is compared to a ship, the tongue to the rudder, the governing the whole body to the turning about the ship. As the rudder is but a small thing, in comparison of the much greater bulk of a ship, and yet, being itself turned, turns the whole ship (*though so great, and driven of so fierce winds*) which way soever the steersman pleaseth: so likewise the tongue, though little to the whole man, (which may withal be driven, and acted by storms of furious passions), yet if it be itself under government, the rest of the man will be so too.

James 3:5

Ver. 5. The accommodation of the former similitudes.

The tongue is a little member, i.e. one of the lesser, in comparison of the body.

And boasteth great things; the Greek word signifies, according to its derivation, the lifting up of the neck (as horses, mentioned Jas 3:3, are wont to do in their pride) in a way of bravery and triumph; and hence it is used to express boasting and glorying, but here seems to imply something more, viz. not only the uttering big words, but doing great things, whether good and useful, as in the former similitudes, or evil, as in what follows; or its boasting how great things it can do: q. d. The tongue, though little, is of great force and efficacy, and it will tell you so itself; it not only boasts what its fellow members can do, but especially what itself can.

Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! Another similitude, in

which he sets forth the evil the tongue, as little as it is, doth, where it is not well governed, as in the former he had shown the good it may do, when kept under rule.

A matter; the word signifies either any combustible stuff, or, as in the margin, wood, that being the ordinary fuel then in use.

A little fire kindleth; even a spark, the smallest quantity or particle, which may do great mischief, when lighting in suitable matter.

James 3:6

Ver. 6. The application of the similitude in the foregoing words.

The tongue is a fire, i.e. hath the force of fire, and resembles it in the mischief it doth.

A world of iniquity; a heap or aggregation of evils, (as the natural world is an aggregation of many several beings), as we say, an ocean, or a world, of troubles, meaning, a great multitude of them. And the words may be understood, earlier with an ellipsis of the word *matter*, expressed just before, and supplied here; and the pointing a little altered, they may be thus read, And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity (or an unrighteous world, viz. which lies in wickedness, 1Jo 5:19) is the matter, namely, which it inflames. A wicked world is fit fuel for a wicked tongue, and soon catcheth the fire which it kindles. Or rather, as they stand plainly, without any such defect: The tongue is a world of iniquity, i.e. a heap or mass of various sorts of sins; though it be but a little piece of flesh, yet it contains a whole world of wickedness in it, or is as full of evils as the world is of bodies.

It defileth the whole body; infecteth the whole man with sin, Ec 5:6, as being the cause of sin committed by all the members of the body; for though sin begin in the soul, yet it is executed by the body, which therefore seems here put (as Jas 3:2) for the man.

And setteth on fire the course of nature; or, setteth on fire the wheel of geniture, or nativity, (in allusion to a wheel set on fire by a violent, rapid

motion), meaning the course of nativity, i.e. the natural course of life, as the face of nativity or geniture, Jas 1:23, for the *natural face*: the sense is, it inflames with various lusts, wrath, malice, wantonness, pride, &c., the whole course of man's life, so that there is no state nor age free from the evils of it. Whereas other vices either do not extend to the whole man, or are abated with age, or worn away with length of time; the vices of the tongue reach the whole man, and the whole time of his life.

And it is set on fire of hell; i.e. by the devil, the father of lies and slanders, and other tongue sins, Job 1:10 Joh 8:44 Re 12:10; the tongue being the fire, the devil, by the bellows of temptations, inflames it yet more, and thereby kindles the fire of all mischiefs in the world.

James 3:7

Ver. 7. *Every kind;* some of every kind.

Of beasts; wild beasts, such as are most fierce and untractable.

And of birds; though so movable and wandering, the very vagabonds of nature.

And of serpents; which are such enemies to mankind.

And of things in the sea; the inhabitants, as it were, of another world, really of another element.

Is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind; either made gentle, or at least, brought into subjection to man by one means or other. He useth both tenses, the present and the past perfect, to note that such things not only have been, but still are; and that not as the effects of some miraculous providence, as in the case of Daniel, Da 6:1-28, and Paul, Ac 28:1-31, but as that which is usually experienced, and in man's power still to do.

James 3:8

Ver. 8. *But the tongue;* not only other men's tongues, but his own.

Can no man tame; no man of himself, and without the assistance of Divine grace, can bring his tongue into subjection, and keep it in order; nor can any man, by the assistance of any grace promised in this life, so keep it, as that it shall never at all offend.

It is an unruly evil; or, which cannot be restrained, and kept within bounds: wild beasts are kept in by grates and bars, but this by no restraint.

Full of dead poison; the wickedness of the tongue is compared to poison, in respect of the mischief it doth to others. It seems to allude to those kinds of serpents which have poison under their tongues, Ps 140:3, with which they kill those they bite. The poison of the tongue is no less deadly, it murders men's reputations by the slanders it utters, their souls by the lusts and passions it stirs up in them, and many times their bodies too by the contentions and quarrels it raiseth against men.

James 3:9

Ver. 9. *Therewith bless we God;* pray, and speak well of God.

Even the Father; of Christ, and in him of all true believers.

And therewith curse we men; rail on, revile, speak evil of, as well as wish evil to.

Which are made after the similitude of God; either:

1. Saints in whom God's image is anew restored; or rather:
2. Men more generally, who, though they have lost that spiritual knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness in which that image of God, after which man was created, principally consists; yet still have some relics of his image continuing in them.

This is added to aggravate the sin; speaking evil of men made after God's image, is speaking evil of God obliquely, and by reflection.

James 3:10

Ver. 10. He repeats here, by way of exaggeration, what he had said Jas 3:9, to show how exceedingly absurd it is that two such contrary actions should proceed from the same agent.

These things ought not so to be; there is a meiosis in the words; he means, things should be quite contrary. See the like expression, 1Ti 5:13 Tit 1:11.

James 3:11

Ver. 11. Ordinarily and naturally; if any such be, it is looked upon as uncouth and prodigious.

James 3:12

Ver. 12. *Can the tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?* The same tree cannot ordinarily bring forth fruit of different kinds, (on the same branch, whatever it may on different, by ingrafting), much less contrary natures: see Mt 7:16-18.

So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh; or, neither can a salt fountain yield fresh water; but the scope is still the same as in our reading. The apostle argues from what is impossible, or monstrous, in naturals, to what is absurd in manners: q. d. It is as absurd in religion, for the tongue of a regenerate man, which is used to bless God, to take a liberty at other times to curse man, as it would be strange in nature for the same tree, on the same branch, to bear fruits of different kinds; or the same fountain at the same place to send forth bitter water and sweet.

James 3:13

Ver. 13. *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?* i.e. if there be a wise man, &c. See Ps 25:12, and 1Pe 3:10, where what David speaks by way of interrogation, Peter explains by way of assertion. The

apostle having shown the disease of the tongue, comes now to remove the cause, viz. men's opinion of their own wisdom; (they censure others, because they take themselves to be wiser than others); and to point out the remedy, godly meekness, which is the truest wisdom. By wisdom and knowledge the same thing may be meant; or if they be taken for several things, (as sometimes there may be great knowledge where there is but little wisdom), yet these masterly censures he speaks of pretended to both, and were so rigid toward others because so well conceited of themselves: the sense is: You pretend to be wise and knowing, but if you would approve yourselves as such indeed, *show out of a good conversation, &c.*

His works; let him show as the testimony of his wisdom, not his words in hard censures, but his works, viz. good ones, and those not done now and then, or on the by, but in the constant course and tenor of his life; or show his works to be good, by their being not casual, but constant, and his ordinary practice in his whole conversation.

With meekness of wisdom; i.e. meek and gentle wisdom, which can bear, and answer, and teach, and admonish, and rebuke mildly and sweetly, with long-suffering, as well as doctrine, 2Ti 4:2: and then it notes the quality of this wisdom, or such meekness as proceeds from wisdom, or is joined with it, there being some which is foolish, affected, carnal, viz. that which is opposed to zeal; whereas true meekness is only opposed to fierceness and rashness: and thus it notes the cause of meekness.

James 3:14

Ver. 14. *Bitter envying;* Greek, zeal, which he calls bitter, partly to distinguish it from that zeal which is good, whereas this he speaks of is evil, and though it pretends to be zeal, yet is really no other than envy; and partly because it commonly proceeds from an imbittered spirit. and tends to the imbittering it more.

Strife; the usual effect of bitter zeal, or envy.

In your hearts; the fountain whence it proceeds; or strife in the heart implies a heart propense and inclined to strife.

Glory not; glory not of your zeal, or rather of your wisdom, as if you were so well able to reprehend others, but rather be humbled; what you make the matter of your glorying, being really just cause of shame.

And lie not against the truth; viz. by professing yourselves wise, or zealous, when ye are really neither.

James 3:15

Ver. 15. *This wisdom,* which they pretended so much to, who so criticized on other men's actions, and inveighed against them, and which was accompanied with strife and envy.

Descendeth not from above; i.e. from God the author of wisdom, from whom, though every good and perfect gift descends, Jas 1:17, and even knowledge and skill in natural things, Isa 28:26,29; yet this wisdom, being sinful, is not from him, because it *is earthly*, of the earth, of no higher original than from the first Adam, who was of the earth, and earthly, 1Co 15:47; and likewise because it is employed, and fixeth men's minds, on earthly things.

Sensual; this may be understood either:

1. According to the reading in the text, the word here used being so rendered, Jude 1:19, agreeable to 1Th 5:23, where *soul*, from whence the word is derived, is opposed to *spirit*, and taken for the sensitive powers, which men have in common with brutes, in distinction from the intellectual, which go under the name of spirit, and are proper to men: mere reason, without the Divine grace, being apt to degenerate into brutishness, and easily brought to serve the ends of sensual appetite, this wisdom may well be called sensual. Or:
2. According to Jude 1:19, natural, in opposition to spiritual. The natural man (1Co 2:14, where the same word, in the Greek, is used as here) is one that lives under the conduct of his own carnal reason, not enlightened, nor regenerated by the Spirit of God; a man of soul, (as the word imports), or that hath no better, no higher principle in him than his own soul. Accordingly, this wisdom here mentioned, is such as

proceeds merely from a man's own soul, in its natural state, destitute of the light and grace of God's Spirit, and therefore may be termed natural.

Devilish; because it is of the devil, or such as is in him, and makes men like him, who is a proud spirit, and envious, a liar and slanderer, Joh 8:44, and who observes men's faults, not to amend them, but accuse them for them.

James 3:16

Ver. 16. *For where envying and strife is;* the usual companions of this devilish wisdom.

There is confusion; or, inconsistency, viz. both with man's self and others; envy makes him unquiet in himself, and troublesome to others, by causing contentions and seditions among them, and breaking their peace, as well as his own.

And every evil work; all manner of wickedness is ushered in by this confusion and sedition.

James 3:17

Ver. 17. *But the wisdom that is from above;* true wisdom, which is of God, opposed to that which *descendeth not from above*, Jas 3:15.

Is first pure; either excluding mixture, and then it is opposed to hypocritical; or redtar excluding filthiness, and then it is opposed to *sensual*, Jas 3:15, and implies freedom from the defilement of sin and error, it being the property of true wisdom to make men adhere both to truth and holiness.

Then peaceable; disposeth men to peace, both as to the making and keeping it, in opposition to strife and contention, which is the fruit of the earthly wisdom. Peaceableness, which relates to man, is set after purity, which respects God in the first place, to intimate, that purity must have the preference to peace. Our peace with men must always be with a salvo to

our respects to God and holiness.

Gentle; or equal, or moderate, Php 4:5 1Ti 3:3 Tit 3:2. It implies that gentleness (as we translate it) whereby we bear with others' infirmities, forgive injuries, interpret all things for the best, recede from our own right for peace sake; and is opposed to that austerity and rigidness in our practices and censures, which will bear with nothing in weak, dissenting, or offending brethren.

Easy to be entreated; easily persuadable. True wisdom makes men yield to good admonitions, good counsel, good reason. This is opposed to implacableness, Ro 1:31; pride, and obstinacy in evil, Pr 12:1 13:1.

Full of mercy; a grace whereby we pity others that are afflicted, or that offend, and is opposed to inhumanity and inexorableness.

And good fruits; beneficence, liberality, and all other offices of humanity, which proceed from mercy.

Without partiality; or, without judging, i.e. either a curious inquiring into the faults of others, to find matter for censures, which many times infers wrangling, as our margin renders it; or a discerning between person and person, upon carnal accounts, which is *partiality*, as it is here translated, and Jas 2:4.

And without hypocrisy; or, counterfeiting, as they do that judge others, being guilty of the same things, or as bad, themselves: or *hypocrisy* may be here added, to show that sincerity is the perfection of all the rest before named; purity, peace, and gentleness, &c., may be counterfeited; hypocrisy spoils all; and therefore the wisdom that is from above is sincere, and without hypocrisy.

James 3:18

Ver. 18. *And the fruit of righteousness;* either the fruit we bring forth, which is righteousness itself, Lu 3:8,9 Ro 6:22 Php 1:11; or the fruit we reap, which is the reward of righteousness, viz. eternal life.

Righteousness; metonymically here put for the heavenly wisdom before described, whereof it is the inseparable companion, or the effect, Job 28:28.

Is sown; either righteousness, as the good fruit, is wrought or exercised, Ho 10:12, (as wickedness is said to be sown when it is acted, Job 4:8), or it relates to the reward, which is the fruit, of which righteousness is the seed, Ps 97:11; and then it implies, either the sureness of that reward, that it is as certain as harvest after seed-time: or the non-enjoyment of it for the present, as they that sow their seed receive not the crop till long after.

In peace; either in a mild, peaceable, amicable way; or *in peace* is as much as with peace, viz. spiritual peace and comfort of conscience.

Of them that make peace; that follow after and are studious of peace; and so the words may have a two-fold sense: either the meaning is:

1. That they that exercise righteousness must do it in a sweet and peaceable way: in particular, men may reprehend others, so they do it with moderation and gentleness, not as executioners, to torment them, but as physicians, to heal them; as, on the other side, they that are most peaceably disposed, yet must not make peace without sowing righteousness with it, which includes just reprehension, whereby righteousness is promoted. Or:
2. That they who sow righteousness in peace, i.e. join righteousness with their endeavours after peace, shall reap the reward, not only in comfort here, but in glory hereafter.

James 4:1

Chapter Summary

Jas 4:1-6 Our evil lusts and passions tend to breed quarrels among ourselves, and to set us at enmity with God.

Jas 4:7-10 The way to overcome them, and recover God's favour.

Jas 4:11,12 Against detraction and censoriousness.

Jas 4:13-17 We must not presume on the future, but commit ourselves to God's providence.

Ver. 1. *Wars and fightings*; either it may be understood properly of insurrections, and tumults, in which, possibly, some carnal professors might be engaged; or rather, strife and contention about outward things, wranglings among themselves, and going to law, especially before unbelieving judges, 1Co 6:1.

Your lusts; Greek, pleasures, i.e. those lusts whereof pleasure is the end, which is therefore put for the lusts themselves: he means the over eager desire of riches, worldly greatness, carnal delights, Tit 3:3, where *lusts and pleasures* go together.

That war; oppose and tumultuate against reason, conscience, grace, Ro 7:23 1Pe 2:11.

In your members; not only the members of the body, but faculties of the soul, exercised by them; all the parts of man unrenewed, Col 3:5, which are used as weapons of unrighteousness, Ro 6:13.

James 4:2

Ver. 2. *Ye lust*; passionately and greedily desire.

And have not; either soon lose, or rather cannot get, what ye so lust after.

Ye kill; some copies have it, ye envy, and many suppose that to be the better reading, as agreeing with the context, and with Jas 3:14; envy being the cause of strife there, and joined with emulation, or a desire of having, here. We read it according to other copies, *ye kill*, which, if he speaketh of wars in a proper sense, Jas 4:1, was, no doubt, the effect of them; and if he speak only of strife and contentions, yet they might proceed so far, that the death of some (though not intended) might be the consequent of them, and occasioned by them. Or, he may mean their murderous desires, killing men in their hearts, wishing for and gaping after their death, that they might gain by it; and this agrees with what he speaks of the frustration of their greedy desires, none being more frequently disappointed of their hopes

than they that hope to be gainers by other men's deaths.

And disire to have; or, emulate, i.e. ambitiously affect to have what ye see others have, grieving that they should have more than you.

And cannot obtain; viz; that which ye envy others' having.

Ye fight and war: you wrangle and quarrel with your neighbours for what they have, that ye may get it for yourselves.

Yet ye have not; ye are still needy, though still craving; your lusts are infinite and insatiable in themselves, and no way helpful to you.

Because ye ask not; viz. of God by prayer, who hath promised to give to them that ask, Mt 7:7, not to them that war and fight. Instead of humble seeking to God for what ye want, ye would extort it by force or fraud from one another.

James 4:3

Ver. 3. *Ye ask;* he prevents an objection; q. d. Admit you do pray for the good things you want, or, though you pray for them.

Ye ask amiss; though you pray for good things, yet you do not pray well, or in a right manner, not according to God's will, 1Jo 5:14, and therefore ye are not to complain of not being heard.

That ye may consume it upon your lusts; you pray for the things of this life only, that you may have wherewith to please the flesh, and gratify your carnal appetites, and so an evil end spoils good means; and while you would have God serve your lusts you lose your prayers.

James 4:4

Ver. 4. *Ye adulterers and adulteresses;* he means adulterers and adulteresses in a spiritual sense, i.e. worldly-minded Christians, who being, by profession, married to the Lord, yet gave up those affections to

the things of the world which were due to God only. The like expression is used, Mt 12:39 16:4.

Know ye not; ye ought to know, and cannot but know.

That the friendship of the world; inordinate affection to the world, addictedness or devotedness to the things or men of the world.

Is enmity with God; alienates the soul from God, and God from it, 1Jo 2:15.

Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world; if it be the purpose and resolution of a man's heart to get in with the world, though perhaps he cannot obtain its favour; he courts it, though it be coy to him.

Is the enemy of God; exerciseth hostility against God, by adhering to an interest so contrary to him.

James 4:5

Ver. 5. *Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain?* Greek, emptily, or vainly, i.e. to no purpose. This question hath the force of a negation, q. d. It doth not speak in vain.

Question. What is it which the Scripture doth not speak in vain?

Answer. Either those truths he had been speaking of before, particularly in the former verse, *that the friendship of the world is enmity with God;* or, that which follows in this verse, *the spirit that dwelleth in us,* &c.

The spirit that dwelleth in us; either the Spirit of God, who is said to dwell in believers, 1Co 3:16,17; or the spirit of men, viz. as defiled by sin, and acted by the devil, who works in men while children of disobedience; and then it is the same as corrupt nature.

Lusteth to envy; either is vehemently carried out to envy, or makes us lust, and carrieth us out to it; or lusteth against envy: so the Greek preposition is often used, as Lu 20:19 Eph 6:11 Heb 12:4. Under *envy* he comprehends

all other fleshly lusts, but instanceth in this particularly, as having been speaking of it before, Jas 3:14,16; and because it hath so near a connection with other lusts, whereof it is the cause, or concomitant, and so is a principal member of the old man. This latter clause may either be read interrogatively or affirmatively; and then according as we take *spirit*, either for the Spirit of God, or the human spirit, the sense of the words may be either:

1. Doth the Spirit of God, that dwelleth in us, lust unto envy, i.e. incline and dispose us to so base an affection? The answer is understood: No, and confirmed by the next words, *he giveth more grace*, gives freely, liberally, and therefore doth not make us envy others any good they have. Nothing is more contrary to the Spirit of God, who abounds in his gifts to us, than to make us envy others theirs. Or:
2. We may understand it without any interrogation, taking the preposition to signify, against; and then the sense is: That good Spirit which is in us teacheth us better things than strife and envy, &c., for it lusteth against envy, i.e. makes us lust against it, carries out our hearts to hate and resist it. And this well agrees with what follows; The Spirit, &c., lusts against envy, but he gives more grace, viz. than to envy the good of others. Or:
3. If *spirit* here be understood of the spirit of man, corrupt nature, the sense is plain, as the words lie; man's spirit (especially by the instigation of the devil) lusts, or strongly inclines, to envy, and consequently to other wickednesses, but he (that is, God, Jas 4:4) gives more grace.

Question. Where is any such sentence to be found in the Scripture?

Answer. No where in so many words; but which soever of these ways we take the words, we find the sense in the Scripture. Joshua's envying Eldad and Medad's prophesying, for Moses's sake, seems to be an instance of this lust, Nu 11:29, (compared with Ge 6:5 8:21, where the general inclination of man's heart by nature is said to be evil), and Moses's not envying them an instance of the two former.

James 4:6

Ver. 6. *But he;* either the Spirit of God, if *spirit* in the former verse be understood of the Spirit of God; or God, if *spirit* be there taken for the spirit of man.

Giveth more grace; either, though we, according to our natural inclination, be envious, yet God (or his Spirit) is bountiful and liberal; or God gives to those that are renewed, more grace than to be hurried on by their own old spirit, to envy, strife, and suchlike lusts.

Wherefore he saith; God saith, viz. in the Scripture: or it may be taken indefinitely, and impersonally, for, it is said. The particular place he refers to, is Pr 3:34, according to the translation of the LXX., which not only James, but other New Testament writers, frequently follow.

God resisteth; it is a military term: God sets himself, as in battle, against the proud, defying, beating down, exposing to contempt, and destroying them; he is so far from giving them more gifts, that he rather spoils them, as sworn enemies, of what they have.

The proud; those that by reason of the gifts God hath given them, lift themselves above others: Solomon, in the parallel place, calls them *scorners*; it being the usual guise of those that think over-well of themselves, to despise others, and even contemn the warnings and judgments of God himself, which may well draw him out to fight against them.

But giveth grace unto the humble; not only gives favour and honour in the sight of men to those that are lowly in their own eyes, but especially furnisheth them with grace for the overcoming and mortifying their carnal desires and remaining corruptions.

James 4:7

Ver. 7. *Submit yourselves therefore to God;* viz. voluntarily and freely, and that not only in a way of obedience to all his commands, but (which is chiefly meant here) in a way of humility, and sense of your weakness, and

emptiness, and need of his grace.

Therefore; both because of the danger of pride, (opposed in the former verse to humility), he *resisteth the proud;* and because of the benefit that comes by humility, he *giveth grace to the humble.*

Resist, by faith, and the rest of the spiritual armour, Eph 6:13,14, &c. Or, *resist,* i.e. comply not with his motions and temptations.

The devil; the head and leader of fleshly lusts. These likewise are military terms. Having spoken before of strife and contention, he directs here with whom we may, and with whom we may not, contend. He had commended modesty toward men, they are our equals, we must not lift ourselves above them, nor envy nor strive with them; here he adviseth to submission to God as our supreme Governor, we must not contend with him; and to open war with the devil as our great enemy, our contention must be with him.

And he will flee from you; as to that particular assault in which you resist him; and though he return again, and tempt you again, yet you still resisting, he will still be overcome; ye are never conquered so long as you do not consent.

James 4:8

Ver. 8. *Draw nigh to God;* by faith, which is a coming to God, Heb 7:25; by true repentance, which is a returning to God, Ho 14:1 Mal 3:7; and by fervent prayer to him for the help of his grace, Ps 25:1.

And he will draw nigh to you; by the manifestation of his grace and favour to you, particularly giving you strength against the devil and your lusts.

Cleanse your hands; reform your actions, amend your lives. Hands, the principal instruments of bodily actions, being put for the actions themselves; cleanness of hands signifies the innocency of the outward conversation, Job 22:30 Ps 24:4 26:6 Isa 33:15,16.

Ye sinners; you that are openly and notoriously vicious, whose wickedness appears in your ordinary practices: so such are called, Mt

11:19 Mr 2:15 Lu 7:37 15:2 Joh 9:31.

And purify your hearts; your thoughts and inward affections, from whence the evils of your outward actions proceed, Isa 60:7: see 1Pe 1:22 1Jo 3:3.

Ye double minded; either by the former he understands the profane, and by these, hypocrites, or the same by both, viz. such as had wicked hearts, and led wicked lives; only he shows wherein true repentance consists, viz. in the reformation both of the inward and outward man.

James 4:9

Ver. 9. *Be afflicted;* humble yourselves for your sins, before mentioned, and in the sense of wrath approaching, if ye do not.

And mourn, with inward sorrow of heart.

And weep; show your inward grief by weeping, the usual expression and sign of it.

Let your laughter; your carnal rejoicing in what you get by sinful courses, Jas 4:1,2, lusting, warring, fighting.

Be turned into mourning; exchange your carnal joy for godly sorrow.

And your joy; to the same purpose as laughter, before: by it he means their pleasing themselves in the success of their unrighteousness, the gain of their rapine and violence.

Into heaviness; the same as mourning, or an outward expression of it in the dejection of the countenance, which usually proceeds from shame or sorrow, (and the Greek word signifies both), whereas joy and confidence make men lift up their heads or faces, Ezr 9:6 Job 10:15 Job 11:15 22:26 Lu 21:28.

James 4:10

Ver. 10. *Humble yourselves:* the same duty pressed again, only with respect to the more internal part of it, the debasement of the heart, lest they should rest too much in the outward exercises before mentioned. They did lift up themselves through pride and emulation, and he shows them the best way to the truest exaltation, viz. humility, Mt 23:12 Pr 15:33 18:12.

In the sight of the Lord; sincerely, as in the presence of the Searcher of hearts.

And he shall lift you up; as to your outward state and enjoyments, so far as God sees good for you; but, however, in grace here, and glory hereafter, Lu 14:11.

James 4:11

Ver. 11. *Speak not evil one of another;* viz. unless in the way of an ordinance, by reproof, admonition, &c., Le 5:1 1Co 1:11 11:18 2Co 11:13 2Ti 4:14,15.

He forbids all detraction, rigid censuring, and rash judging the hearts and lives of others, when men condemn whatever doth not suit with their notions or humours, and make their own moroseness the rule of other men's manners.

Judgeth his brother; finds fault with and condemns him for those things which the law doth not condemn in him, or forbid to him, Ro 14:3,4.

Judgeth the law; viz. either:

1. By his practising and approving what the law condemns, i.e. this very censoriousness and detraction: or:
2. By condemning that which the law allows; he condemns the law for allowing it, taxing it as too short and imperfect.

But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge; if thou not only judgest thy brother, and therein invadest the law's office, (whose part it is to judge him), but judgest him for what the law doth not

forbid him, and therein judgest the law itself, as insufficient, and not strict enough; thou dost cast off the law's government, disown its superiority, exempt thyself from any subjection to it, and make thyself merely a judge of it.

James 4:12

Ver. 12. *There is one lawgiver;* one absolute, supreme, universal and spiritual Lawgiver, and who can simply and directly bind men's consciences, and make laws for their souls, Pr 8:15,16 Isa 33:22 Ac 4:19. By this he intimates, that they did invade God's right, who took upon them a legislative power in prescribing to other men's consciences, and making their own will the rule of the others' duty.

Who is able to save and to destroy, both temporally and eternally, De 32:39 1Sa 2:6 Isa 43:13; whereas other lawgivers cannot save or destroy men's souls, nor so much as their lives, without God's concurrence.

Who art thou; what a sorry creature, a man, a worm, that thou shouldst lift up thyself into God's place, and make thyself a judge of one not subject to thee!

That judgest another; the servant of another Master, Ro 14:4. It is a fond thing for thee to take upon thee the power of a judge, when thou hast no power of saving or destroying, rewarding or punishing.

James 4:13

Ver. 13. *Go to now;* either this is a note of transition, or of command to inferiors, or rather of admonition to such as are stupid or rash, and tends to the awakening their attention, and stirring them up to the consideration of their duty, danger, &c.

Ye that say; either with your mouths, or in your hearts.

To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city; not, let us go, but, *we will go,* in the indicative mood; noting the peremptoriness of their

purposes, and their presuming upon future times and things, which were not in their power.

And continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: he doth not condemn merchants travelling into other countries, nor trading there, nor designing gain by their trade, nor forecasting their business; but their promising themselves the continuance of their life, the accomplishing their designs, and the success of their labours, without respect to God's providence and direction, as if their times and their works were in their own hands, not in his.

James 4:14

Ver. 14. *Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow;* whether ye yourselves shall continue till then, or what else shall then be, or not be. In vain do ye boast of whole years, when ye cannot command the events of one day.

For what is your life? This question implies contempt, as 1Sa 25:10 Ps 144:3,4.

It is even a vapour; like a vapour, frail, uncertain, and of short continuance; and then how vain are those counsels and purposes that are built upon no more sure a foundation than your own lives.

James 4:15

Ver. 15. *For that ye ought to say:* it is the real acknowledgment of God's providence, and the dependence of all our affairs upon him, which is here required; and this is to be done, either expressly with the mouth in such like forms of speech as this is, so far as is needful for our glorifying God, and distinguishing ourselves from those that are profane, as hath been customary with the saints in Scripture, Ac 18:21 Ro 1:10, and other places, but always inwardly, and in the heart.

If the Lord will; i.e. with his providential or directive will, which as yet we do not know, and therefore we say: *If the Lord will:* for all our counsels

and determinations must be regulated by his preceptive or directive will, which we do know; and therefore, with respect to that will, we are not to say: We will do this, or that, if God will, i.e. commands it, but we must first see that it be commanded, and then resolve to do it if God will, that is, if in his providence he shall permit us.

If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that; some read the words: If the Lord will, and we shall live, we will do this, or that; and then the latter copulative *and* is redundant, and the sense is, that all our actions depend not only upon our living, but upon God's willing; God may permit us to live, and yet not permit us to do this or that. But if we take the words according to our reading: *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that,* the meaning is, that both our life and actions depend upon the will of God, nor the one, nor the other, is in our power. And so here is a double check to the vain boasts of those that were so peremptory in their resolutions, without considering the frailty of their own lives, or the dependence of their actions upon God's will, when both the one and the other are at his disposal.

James 4:16

Ver. 16. *But now ye rejoice,* or, glory; ye please yourselves with them.

In your boastings; viz. of your carnal projects, and hopes of what you intend to do, and expect to get: q. d. You vainly boast of your designs and successes, without taking notice of God's providence, under the government of which you and your affairs all are.

All such rejoicing is evil; both as being contrary to the word, which assures us so often that it is vain to promise ourselves long life, or prosperity in our worldly business, without God's leave and blessing, Ps 127:1 Pr 16:9,33; and likewise as proceeding from pride and security.

James 4:17

Ver. 17. Either this may relate to all that the apostle had been before speaking of; q. d. I have admonished you of your duty, and now ye know

what ye are to do, and therefore if you do it not it will be your sin: or, it may refer to what he was immediately before discoursing of, and may be spoken to prevent an objection. They might say, he taught them no more than what they knew already; and that they acknowledged God's providence in all things. To this he replies, that if they knew their duty, they ought to practise it, and so actually submit themselves and their affairs to the conduct of that providence; and their not doing it, now that they knew it, would the rather be their sin.

To him it is sin; i.e. sin indeed, or (as we say) sin with a witness; a greater sin, and which hath more of the nature of sin in it, or is more highly aggravated, by being against knowledge, and so is punishable with severer vengeance, than if done out of ignorance, Lu 12:47. See the like expression, Joh 9:41 15:22,24.

James 5:1

Chapter Summary

Jas 5:1-6 Wicked rich men are warned of God's impending judgment.

Jas 5:7-11 The brethren are exhorted to patience, after the example of the prophets and of Job,

Jas 5:12 to abstain from swearing,

Jas 5:13-15 to pray in affliction and sickness, and sing psalms in prosperity,

Jas 5:16-18 to acknowledge mutually their faults, and to pray for one another,

Jas 5:19,20 and to endeavour to reclaim sinners.

Ver. 1. *Go to now:* see Jas 4:13.

Ye rich men; he speaks to them not simply as rich, (for riches and grace sometimes may go together), but as wicked, not only wallowing in wealth, but abusing it to pride, luxury, oppression, and cruelty.

Against these, either as looking on them as incurable, or upon

supposition of their impenitency, he denounceth God's judgments; and that whether they were unconverted Jews, vexing the believing Jews; or Gentiles, oppressing the Christian Jews; or Christians in profession and name, who yet were so vile in their practice, as to condemn and kill the just; and that they might more speciously do it, to draw them before the judgment-seats, &c.

Weep and howl; to denote the extremity of the calamities coming upon them, in which they should not only weep like men, but howl like wild beasts: see Jer 4:8 Mic 1:8 Joe 1:10,13.

For your miseries that shall come upon you; or, are coming upon you, to signify the certainty and nearness of them. The miseries he means may be both temporal and eternal.

James 5:2

Ver. 2. *Your riches are corrupted:* either by *riches* he means the general, and by *garments*, gold and silver, the particulars in which their riches consisted; and then being corrupted, is to be taken generally, as comprehending the several ways whereby the several kinds of their riches were spoiled: or else, by *riches* he understands such things as were liable to corruption, or putrefaction, as corn, wine, oil, which were a great part of their riches.

And your garments are moth-eaten; costly garments, in which rich men are wont to pride themselves; and under them may be comprehended all such clothes as may be eaten by worms or moths.

James 5:3

Ver. 3. *Your gold and silver is cankered;* the most precious and lasting metals; yet even they, with long disuse, canker, and go to decay. Under these, other metals in esteem among them may be understood.

And the rust of them shall be a witness against you: by a prosopopoeia, that which properly belongs to living persons is ascribed to dead things, as Hab 2:11 Lu 19:40. It is as much as if he had said: The rust shall be a certain evidence against you, and which will as effectually convict you, as any living witness could do, of your folly in putting your trust in perishing things, your greediness in hoarding them up, your unmercifulness in not supplying the wants of others, and your unreasonableness in denying the use of them to yourselves, when you had rather let them lie by and perish, than enjoy the comfort of them, or do good with them. The like expression we have, Mr 6:11.

And shall eat your flesh; the rust (the witness of your covetousness and cruelty) which now eats your money, shall hereafter devour yourselves, soul and body, (which he means by *flesh*), viz. by procuring and kindling the wrath of God upon you, (compared to fire), and likewise by galling your consciences with a vexatious remembrance of your sin and folly; and so what in the judgment is a witness against you, in hell will be a tormentor to you.

As it were fire; as if you had reserved fire in your treasure, as well as treasure in your chests.

Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days: either this may be understood metaphorically, ye have heaped a treasure of wrath for the last days, Ro 2:5; or literally, ye have hoarded up your wealth against the last and fatal days, in which God is bringing those judgments upon you which will consume all.

James 5:4

Ver. 4. *Behold;* this is either a note of demonstration, as Joh 1:29; q. d. The case is plain, and cannot be denied; or of excitation; q. d. Seriously consider it; or rather, of confirmation, to intimate, that the threatenings here denounced should certainly be made good upon them: see Jude 1:14.

The hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields; the wages of those by whose labour and sweat ye yourselves live and are nourished.

Which is of you kept back by fraud; either wholly denied them, or detained from them when due to them, contrary to the law, Le 19:13 De 24:14,15. Deferring payment is a sort of defrauding, as it bereaves the creditor of the benefit of improvement; and so they are taxed here with injustice, as well as covetousness, in that they lived upon other men's labours, and starved the poor to enrich themselves.

Crieth; viz. to God for vengeance, as such sins are said to do, which either are so openly and boldly committed, as to dare the justice of God, or so secretly, or securely, that they are like to escape the justice of men, Ge 4:10 18:20,21. Among others, oppression of the poor is a loud crying sin, Ex 2:23 Job 24:11,12 Hab 2:9,11,12.

The Lord of sabaoth; i. e. the Lord of hosts, as having all the creatures above and below, of all sorts, ranked under him as their great Commander, whose will they are ready to execute. He mentions God by this title, not only for the encouragement of the poor oppressed, whose Patron and Protector he avows himself to be, Ex 22:23,24,27 Pr 23:11; but for terror to the powerful oppressors, who think themselves out of the reach of men's judgment.

James 5:5

Ver. 5. *Ye have lived in pleasure*; luxuriously and deliciously, giving up yourselves to your sensual appetites, Am 6:4-6 Lu 16:19,25.

On the earth; where you place your happiness without looking higher, and from whence you fetch your delights, Php 3:19.

And been wanton: the same word is used 1Ti 5:6; it seems to imply effeminate, lascivious behaviour, as the effect of their riotous living.

Ye have nourished your hearts: either by a Hebrew phrase, ye have nourished your hearts, for ye have nourished yourselves, Es 6:6 Job 10:13; or, ye have cheered up and encouraged your hearts in your luxury by pampering your flesh, (Lu 12:19), and feeding not to the satisfaction of nature, but the inflaming of your lusts.

As in a day of slaughter; either securely, and without fear of the destruction coming upon you, as sheep graze quietly, though by and by to be brought to the shambles; or rather, *in a day of slaughter*, i.e. in a day of solemn feasting, when many beasts were killed in sacrifice, on which they were wont to feast, Pr 7:14 17:1. They made every day a feasting day, and that, too, lavishing out other men's dues upon their own flesh, and sparing from their labourers that they might spend upon their lusts. This he brings to aggravate their sin.

James 5:6

Ver. 6. *Ye have condemned and killed;* i.e. procured by your wealth and power the passing unrighteous sentences, and thereby the destruction of the just.

The just; indefinitely and collectively, *the just* for any just man, viz. such as were innocent and just in comparison of their persecutors.

And he doth not resist you; this notes not only the patience of such in bearing injuries, but their weakness, and being destitute of human help against their adversaries' power.

James 5:7

Ver. 7. *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord;* viz. to judgment, and that either particular, to avenge the quarrels of innocent sufferers upon their tyrannical persecutors; or rather, to the general judgment, in which a full retribution is to be made both to the just and unjust, Ro 2:5,6, &c. To which judgment the Scripture calls all to look, especially those that are under oppression and persecution, 2Th 1:6,7, &c.

Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth; which cost him hard labour, and by which he receives great benefit, the sustentation of his life.

Until he receive the early and latter rain; the rain soon after the sowing, which caused the corn to spring up; and that before the harvest, which plumped it, and made it fit for reaping, De 11:14 Jer 5:24 Ho 6:3 Joe 2:23.

James 5:8

Ver. 8. *Be ye also patient;* viz. in expectation of your harvest, and the fruit of your labours, as the husbandman is in looking for his.

Stablish your hearts; let your hearts be steadfast in faith and constant in holiness, encouraging yourselves to both by the coming of the Lord.

For the coming of the Lord draweth nigh; as before, his coming to the general judgment, which is said to be nigh, because of the certainty of its coming, and the uncertainty of the time when it will come, and because it is continually drawing on, and the whole time of the world's duration till then is but short in comparison of the eternity following; and likewise because the particular judgment of every man is nigh at hand. See Php 4:5 Heb 10:37.

James 5:9

Ver. 9. *Grudge not;* Greek: Groan not; the sense may be, either: Envy not one another, (or, as we translate it: *Grudge not*), it being the nature of envy to groan at other men's good; or, Groan not by way of accusation or complaint to God against others, desiring him to avenge your quarrels, as if you were too good to suffer injuries, or God were unjust or forgetful of righting you.

One against another; brother against brother, Christian against Christian: they were injured not only by rich worldlings and open oppressors, but by their fellow professors, and gave one another mutual cause of sighing and groaning.

Lest ye be condemned; lest God punish you all; there being none of you but have given others cause of grief and complaint, as well as others have given you, Mt 7:1.

Behold, the Judge standeth before the door; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge of you all, is at hand, (Php 4:5), in a readiness either to bring those evils upon you which you wish may fall upon others, or to give you your reward, if *through patient continuance in well doing* you seek for it, Ro 2:7. The like phrase we have, Mt 24:33 Mr 13:29; or it may allude to Ge 4:7.

James 5:10

Ver. 10. *Take, my brethren, the prophets;* as being most eminent among God's people, and leaders of them; he intimates that it is an honour to suffer among the best.

Who have spoken in the name of the Lord; by his command and authority, and so were employed in the highest services in the church, and thereby appeared to be approved of God, and most dear to him.

For an example of suffering affliction: as much as God honoured and loved them, yet they were not exempted from afflictions, but were maligned, traduced, and persecuted by men, 1Ki 18:13 19:14 2Ki 6:31 Am 7:10 Heb 11:1-40; and therefore when they suffered such hard things, it is no shame for you to suffer the like, Mt 5:12.

And of patience; as the example of their sufferings should prevent your discouragement, so the example of their patience should provoke your imitation;

God having set them forth as examples of both, that if you suffer the same things, you may suffer with the same minds.

James 5:11

Ver. 11. *We count them happy which endure;* we ourselves count them happy that endure, and therefore should be patient, and not count ourselves miserable if we endure too.

Which endure; viz. patiently and constantly, Mt 5:10,11.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job; for which he was as eminent as for his sufferings; and though some signs of impatience be showed, yet his patience and submission to God being prevalent, and most remarkable to him, that only is taken notice of, and his failings overlooked.

And have seen the end of the Lord: Job's patience is heard of, but God's end seen: seeing being a clearer way of perception than hearing, is put in this latter clause, because God's bounty and recompence was more evident than Job's patience.

The end of the Lord; the good issue God gave to all Job's sufferings, in restoring him to his former state, and doubling his prosperity.

That the Lord is very pitiful; full of bowels, Greek; the bowels being the seat of compassion, (in which we feel a stirring when strong affections are working in us), are frequently put to signify the most tender and movable affections, such as mothers have toward their children, Ge 43:30 1Ki 3:26 Isa 43:15 Col 3:12; this seems to note the affection itself, or God's readiness to show mercy, Lu 1:78.

And of tender mercy: this may imply acts of mercy suitable to a merciful nature, the former mercy within, and this mercy breaking out.

James 5:12

Ver. 12. Because it is a great sin to swear upon every slight occasion, and it was very usual among the Jews, and it was the more difficult to bring them off from it who were so much accustomed to it; therefore the apostle commands them, that *above all things* they should not swear, i.e. should take special care they did not, and watch diligently against a sin so many were addicted to, and into which they might so easily fall.

Swear not; all swearing is not forbidden, any more than Mt 5:34; (for oaths are made use of by holy men both in the Old and New Testament, Ge 21:23,24 24:3 26:28 1Ki 17:1,2 2Co 1:23 Ga 1:20; and the use of an oath is permitted and approved of by God himself, Ps 15:4 Heb 6:16); but such oaths as are false, rash, vain, without just cause, or customary and frequent in ordinary discourse, 1Ki 19:2 Jer 5:2 Mt 5:37.

Neither by heaven, neither by the earth; by which the Jews thought they might lawfully swear, as likewise by other creatures, so the name of God were not interposed; not considering that where it is not expressed yet it is implied, Mt 23:20,21.

Neither by any other oath; viz. of the like kind.

But let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay: either:

1. Let your speech be yea, yea, and nay, nay; i.e. by plain affirmations and negations, without the addition of any oath for confirmation, Mt 5:37: or
2. *Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay,* i.e. let your words be in truth and sincerity, your speech seconded by your actions; accustom yourselves to truth and plainness in speaking, and that will take away the occasion of swearing. See the like, 2Co 1:17-19.

Lest ye fall into condemnation; viz. for taking the name of God in vain, Ex 20:7, which is always done in an unwarrantable oath.

James 5:13

Ver. 13. *Is any among you afflicted?* either troubled or afflicted in mind, as appears by the opposite being *merry*, or more generally afflicted any way. Not that we need not pray at other times, but when under afflictions God calls us more especially to it, and our own necessities put us upon it.

Let him pray; for support, patience, sanctification of afflictions, &c.

Is any merry? let him sing psalms; express his mirth in a holy manner, by praising God with psalms or spiritual songs for mercies received from him, 1Co 14:15 Eph 5:19; and so keep up his spiritual mirth by a spiritual exercise, lest his cheerfulness degenerate into vanity and frothiness.

James 5:14

Ver. 14. *Is any sick?* Or infirm, though not desperately and incurably.

Let him call for the elders; especially teaching elders, they being usually best furnished with gifts who labour in the word and doctrine, 1Ti 5:17. It is in the plural number, either by an enallage for the singular; q. d. Let him send for some or other of the elders; or, because there were in those times usually several elders (an ecclesiastical senate) in each church.

And let them pray over him; as it were setting him before God, and presenting him to him, which might be a means to stir up the greater affection and warmth in prayer; see 1Ki 17:21 2Ki 4:33,34 Joh 11:41 Ac 20:10 9:40; or laying on their hands, as Ac 28:8, which yet seems to be for the same end.

Anointing him with oil; an outward rite used in those times, in miraculous healing sick persons, which might then be kept up, while the gift whereof it was the symbol continued; but the gift ceasing, it is vainly used. These cures were sometimes wrought only with a word, Ac 9:34 14:10 16:18; sometimes by taking by the hand, or embracing, Ac 3:7 20:10; sometimes by laying on of hands, Mr 16:18 Ac 9:17; sometimes by anointing with oil, Mr 6:13; and so this is not an institution of a sacrament, but a command, that those elders that had the gift of healing, (as many in those days had), being called by the sick to come to them, should (the Spirit of the Lord so directing them) exercise that gift, as well as pray over them.

In the name of the Lord; either, calling upon the Lord, and so joining prayer with their anointing; or, *in the name,* is by the authority of the Lord, from whom they had received that gift.

James 5:15

Ver. 15. *And the prayer of faith;* i.e. proceeding from faith; the cure is ascribed to prayer, the moral means, and standing ordinance, not to the anointing, which was but ceremonial and temporary; and to faith in prayer, to show that this remedy was effectual only when faith (requisite to the working of miracles) was active, viz. in a certain persuasion that the sick person should be healed.

Shall save the sick; restore to health, (if God see it fit, and the health of the body be good for the soul), Mr 10:52 Lu 7:50 18:42.

And the Lord shall raise him up; the elders pray, but the Lord raiseth up, being

prayed to in faith.

Raise him up; the same as saving before, only the word seems to respect the sick man's lying upon his bed, from which he riseth when he is healed, Mr 1:31.

If he have committed sins; if he have by his sins procured his sickness; or, those sins for which particularly God visits him with sickness; sin being often the cause of sickness, Mt 9:2 Joh 5:14 1Co 11:30, though not always, Joh 9:2.

They shall be forgiven him; God will take away the cause as well as the effect, heal the soul as well as the body, and prayer is the means of obtaining both.

James 5:16

Ver. 16. *Confess your faults;* some copies have the illative particle, therefore, in the text, but even without that here seems to be a connexion between this and the former verse: he had said, the sick man's sins should be forgiven upon the elders' praying; and here he adds, that they must be confessed.

One to another; either, that ye may be reconciled to one another when offended, or rather, confess when admonished or reproved for sin, or wounded in your consciences with the sense of it: and so this is not meant of auricular confession made to a priest, but such as should be made, though especially to ministers, yet, when need is, even to godly, experienced Christians, for the easing and disburdening men's consciences, and getting the help of others' prayers.

And pray one for another; both in other ordinary cases, and chiefly upon occasion of your mutual confessions, and those soul-troubles that prompted you to them.

That ye may be healed; not only recover bodily health when sick, but spiritual, when weakened or wounded by sin. Healing is often applied to the soul as well as the body, Mt 13:15 Lu 4:18 Heb 12:13 1Pe 2:24.

The effectual fervent prayer: our translators use two words (and little enough) to express the significancy of the Greek word in this place: some translate it inwrought; it seems to be a prayer wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit, and so may imply both the efficiency of God's Spirit, (the Spirit of supplications, Zec 12:10), and the vehemency of holy affections caused by him in prayer, Ro 8:26.

Of a righteous man; one sincerely righteous, and in a gospel sense; the following instance of Elias shows that it is not to be understood of a man absolutely righteous.

Avaieth much; is very powerful with God for obtaining what is desired, 1Jo 5:14; whereas God heareth not sinners, Pr 15:8,29.

James 5:17

Ver. 17. *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are;* both of body and mind, natural and moral; and so, though he were righteous, yet he was not perfect; though an eminent prophet, yet but a man.

And he prayed earnestly; with that effectual, fervent prayer before mentioned. It is a Hebrew phrase, and notes vehemency, as Lu 22:15.

That it might not rain; this is not expressly mentioned in the history, but this apostle might have it by revelation, or by certain tradition well known in his age. Other passages of the like nature we meet with in the New Testament which are not in the Old: see 1Ti 3:8 Heb 12:21 Jude 1:9.

And it rained not on the earth; or, the land, viz. of the ten tribes, and the places bordering on them, as Sarepta, 1Ki 17:9 Lu 4:25,26.

By the space of three years and six months: so Lu 4:25.

Question. How doth this agree with 1Ki 18:1, where it is said, *the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year?*

Answer. Most probably it was in the midst of the third year from his coming to Sarepta; and he was by the brook Cherith a year. 1Ki 17:7, where the margin reads it, according to the Hebrew, at the end of days, i.e. the days of a year, as the phrase is often used, Ge 4:3 Jud 17:10; so that his time spent in both places may well make up the *three years and six months*.

James 5:18

Ver. 18. *And he prayed again;* after the destroying the prophets of Baal. Baal-worship especially gave occasion to his former prayer, which he puts up out of his zeal to God's glory, then laid low by the Israelites' idolatry, and a desire to have them by some exemplary punishment for their sin awakened to repentance. And the destruction of the idolaters, and reformation of the people, who now acknowledged the Lord to be God, might give occasion to this.

And the heaven gave rain; i.e. the air or clouds, which had not been for three years before.

James 5:19

Ver. 19. *The truth;* the truth of God revealed in the gospel as the complete rule of faith and life: see the gospel called *the truth* by way of eminency, Jas 1:18 Ga 2:5,14 3:1 5:7 Eph 1:13 1Pe 1:22.

And one; any one, minister or private believer, who may be an instrument in the conversion of others; though one acts by way of authority, the other by way of charity, yet both out of duty.

Convert him; viz. ministerially or instrumentally, in subordination to God. The work is his, Eph 2:10, but often is ascribed to the instruments acting under him, and using means appointed by him, and by which he works, Ac 26:18.

James 5:20

Ver. 20. *Of his way;* of his life and actions, which is contrary to the way which God hath prescribed.

Shall save; men are said to save in the same way as to convert, viz. instrumentally.

A soul; the soul of him that is thus converted, 1Ti 4:16: *soul* for person, as Jas 1:21.

From death: eternal death, unto which he was hastening while he continued in the error of his way, which led him toward destruction.

And shall hide a multitude of sins; in the same sense as before he is said to convert and save his soul, viz. in being instrumental to bring him to faith and repentance, upon which God pardons, i.e. hides his sins, (Ps 32:1), though not from the eye of his omniscience, yet from the eye of his vindictive justice, and so as not to bring them forth in judgment against him.