

The challenge of faith

1 James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus the Messiah, to the twelve dispersed tribes: greeting.

²My dear family, when you find yourselves tumbling into various trials and tribulations, learn to look at it with total joy, ³because you know that, when your faith is put to the test, what comes out is patience. ⁴What's more, you must let patience have its complete effect, so that you may be complete and whole, not falling short in anything.

⁵If any one of you falls short in wisdom, they should ask God for it, and it will be given them. God, after all, gives generously and ungrudgingly to all people. ⁶But they should ask in faith, with no doubts. A person who doubts is like a wave of the sea which the wind blows and tosses about. ⁷Someone like that should not suppose they will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸since they are double-minded and unstable in everything they do.

The snares of the world and the gift of God

⁹Brothers and sisters who find themselves impoverished should celebrate the fact that they have risen to this height—¹⁰and those who are rich, that they are brought down low, since the rich will disappear like a wildflower. ¹¹You see, the rich will be like the grass: when the sun rises with its scorching heat, it withers the grass so that its flower droops and all its fine appearance comes to nothing. That's what it will be like when the rich wither away in the midst of their busy lives.

¹²God's blessing on the man who endures testing! When he has passed the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³Nobody being tested should say, "It's God that's testing me," for God cannot be tested by evil, and he himself tests nobody. ¹⁴Rather, each person is tested when they are dragged off and enticed by their own desires. ¹⁵Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin; and when sin reaches maturity it gives birth to death.

¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear family. ¹⁷Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes down from above, from the father of lights. His steady light doesn't vary. It doesn't change and produce shadows. ¹⁸He became our father by the word of truth; that was his firm decision, and the result is that we are a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

The word that goes to work

¹⁹So, my dear brothers and sisters, get this straight. Every person should be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. ²⁰Human anger, you see, doesn't produce God's justice! ²¹So put away everything that is sordid, all overflowing malice, and humbly receive the word which has been planted within you and which has the power to rescue your lives.

²²But be people who do the word, not merely people who hear it and deceive themselves. ²³Someone who hears the word but doesn't do it, you see, is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴He notices himself, but then he goes away and quickly forgets what he looked like. ²⁵But the person who looks into the perfect law of freedom, and goes on with it, not being a hearer who forgets but a doer who does the deed—such a person is blessed in their doing.

²⁶If anyone supposes that they are devout, and does not control their tongue, but rather deceives their heart—such a person's devotion is futile. ²⁷As far as God the father is concerned, pure, unsullied devotion works like this: you should visit orphans and widows in their sorrow, and prevent the world leaving its dirty smudge on you.

No favorites!

2 My brothers and sisters, as you practice the faith of our Lord Jesus, the anointed King of glory, you must do so without favoritism. ²What I mean is this: if someone comes into your assembly wearing gold rings, all dressed up, and a poor person comes in wearing shabby clothes, ³you cast your eyes over the person wearing fine clothes and say, "Please! Have a seat up here!" but then you turn to the poor person and say, "Stand there!" or, "Get down there by my footstool!" ⁴When you do this, are you not discriminating among yourselves? Are you not turning into judges with evil thoughts? ⁵Listen, my dear brothers and sisters. Isn't it the case that God has chosen the poor (as the world sees it) to be rich in faith, and to inherit the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. After all, who are the rich? The rich are the ones who lord it over you and drag you into court, aren't they? ⁷The rich are the ones who blaspheme the wonderful name which has been pronounced over you, aren't they?

⁸Supposing, however, you keep the royal law, as it is written, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"; if you do this, you will do well. ⁹But if you show favoritism, you are committing sin, and you will be convicted by the law as a lawbreaker. ¹⁰Anyone who keeps the whole law, you see, but fails in one point, has become guilty of all of it. ¹¹For the one who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." So if you do not commit adultery, but do murder, you have become a lawbreaker. ¹²Speak and act in such a way as people who are going to be

judged by the law of freedom. ¹³Judgment is without mercy, you see, for those who have shown no mercy. But mercy triumphs over judgment.

Faith and works

¹⁴What use is it, my dear family, if someone says they have faith when they don't have works? Can faith save such a person? ¹⁵Supposing a brother or sister is without clothing, and is short even of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; be warm, be full!"—but doesn't give them what their bodies need—what use is that? ¹⁷In the same way, faith, all by itself and without works, is dead.

¹⁸But supposing someone says, "Well: you have faith, and I have works." All right: show me your faith—but without doing any works; and then I will show you *my* faith, and I'll do it by my works! ¹⁹You believe that "God is one"? Well and good! The demons believe that, too, and they tremble! ²⁰Do you want to know, you stupid person, that faith without works is lifeless? ²¹Wasn't Abraham our father justified by his works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You can see from this that faith was working together with the works, and the faith reached its fulfillment through the works. ²³That is how the scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called "God's friend." ²⁴So you see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵In the same way, wasn't Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she gave shelter to the spies and sent them off by another road? ²⁶Just as the body without the spirit is dead, you see, so faith without works is dead.

Taming the tongue

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters; you know that we will be judged more severely. ²All of us make many mistakes, after all. If anyone makes no mistakes in what they say, such a person is a fully complete human being, capable of keeping firm control over the whole body as well. ³We put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, and then we can direct their whole bodies. ⁴Consider, too, the case of large ships; it takes strong winds to blow them along, but one small rudder will turn them whichever way the helmsman desires and decides. ⁵In the same way, the tongue is a little member but boasts great things. See how small a fire it takes to set a large forest ablaze! ⁶And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is a world of injustice, with its place established right there among our members. It defiles the whole body; it sets the wheel of nature ablaze, and is itself set ablaze by hell. ⁷Every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, you see, can be tamed, and has been tamed, by humans. ⁸But no single human is able to

tame the tongue. It is an irrepressible evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹By it we bless the Lord and father; and by it we curse humans who are made in God's likeness! ¹⁰Blessing and curses come out of the same mouth! My dear family, it isn't right that it should be like that. ¹¹Does a spring put out both sweet and bitter water from the same source? ¹²Dear friends, can a fig tree bear olives, or a vine bear figs? Nor can salt water yield fresh.

True and false wisdom

¹³Who is wise and discerning among you? Such a person should, by their upright behavior, display their works in the humility of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and contention in your hearts, don't boast, and tell lies against the truth. ¹⁵This isn't the wisdom that comes from above. It is earthly, merely human, coming from the world of demons. ¹⁶For where there is jealousy and contention, there you will get unruly behavior and every kind of evil practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from above is first holy, then peaceful, gentle, compliant, filled with mercy and good fruits, unbiased, sincere. ¹⁸And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Humility and faith

4 Where do wars come from? Why do people among you fight? It all comes from within, doesn't it—from your desires for pleasure which make war in your members. ²You want something and you haven't got it, so you murder someone. You long to possess something, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war. The reason you don't have it is because you don't ask for it! ³And when you do ask, you don't get it, because you ask wrongly, intending to spend it on your pleasures. ⁴Adulterers! Don't you know that to be friends with the world means being enemies with God? So anyone who wants to be friends with the world is setting themselves up as God's enemy. ⁵Or do you suppose that when the Bible says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit he has made to dwell in us," it doesn't mean what it says?

⁶But God gives more grace; so it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." ⁷Submit to God, then; resist the devil and he will run away from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Make your hands clean, you sinners; and make your hearts pure, you double-minded lot. ⁹Make yourselves wretched; mourn and weep. Let your laughter turn to mourning, and your joy to sorrow. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

Living by trust in God

¹¹Do not speak evil against one another, my dear family. Anyone who speaks evil against another family member, or passes judgment

against them, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge! ¹²There is one lawgiver, one judge who can rescue or destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

¹³Now look here, you people who say, “Today, or tomorrow, we will go to such-and-such a town and spend a year there, and trade, and make some money.” ¹⁴You have no idea what the next day will bring. What is your life? You are a mist which appears for a little while and then disappears again. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live, and we shall do this, or that.” ¹⁶But, as it is, you boast in your pride. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷So then, if anyone knows the right thing to do, but doesn’t do it, it becomes sin for them.

Warnings to the rich

5 Now look here, you rich! Weep and wail for the horrible things that are going to happen to you! ²Your riches have rotted, and your clothes have become moth-eaten, ³your gold and your silver have rusted, and their rust will bear witness against you and will eat up your flesh like fire. You have stored up riches in the last days! ⁴Look: you cheated the workers who mowed your fields by keeping back their wages, and those wages are crying out! The cries of the farm workers have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵You have lived off the fat of the land, in the lap of luxury. You have fattened your own hearts on a day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned the Righteous One and killed him, and he doesn’t resist you.

Patience and trust

⁷So be patient, my brothers and sisters, for the appearing of the Lord. You know how the farmer waits for the valuable crop to come up from the ground. He is patient over it, waiting for it to receive the early rain and then the late rain. ⁸In the same way, you must be patient, and make your hearts strong, because the appearing of the Lord is near at hand. ⁹Don’t grumble against one another, my brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged. Look—the judge is standing at the gates! ¹⁰Consider the prophets, my brothers and sisters, who spoke in the name of the Lord. Take them as an example of longsuffering and patience. ¹¹When people endure, we call them “blessed by God.” Well, you have heard of the endurance of Job; and you saw the Lord’s ultimate purpose. The Lord is deeply compassionate and kindly.

¹²Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear. Don’t swear by heaven; don’t swear by earth; don’t use any other oaths. Let your “Yes” be “Yes” and your “No” be “No.” That way, you will not fall under judgment.

Praying in faith

¹³Are any among you suffering? Let them pray. Are any cheerful? Let them sing psalms. ¹⁴Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church, and they should pray over the sick person, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵Faithful prayer will rescue the sick person, and the Lord will raise them up. If they have committed any sin, it will be forgiven them. ¹⁶So confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

When a righteous person prays, that prayer carries great power. ¹⁷Elijah was a man with passions like ours, and he prayed and prayed that it might not rain—and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, the sky gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

¹⁹My dear family, if someone in your company has wandered from the truth, and someone turns them back, ²⁰know this: the one who turns back a sinner from wandering off into error will rescue that person’s life from death, and cover a multitude of sins.