

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

CHAP. I.

UNTO the twelve tribes scattered abroad,
James, an apostle of the living God,
And of the Lord Christ Jesus, salutation.
My brethren, when you fall into temptation
Of divers kinds, rejoice, as men that know
From trial of your faith doth patience flow.
But let your patience have its full effect,
That you may be entire, without defect.
If any of you lack wisdom, let him cry
To God, and he will give it lib'rally,
And not upbraid. But let him ask in faith,
Not wavering, for he that wavereth,
Unto a wave o' th' sea I will compare,
Driv'n with the wind and tossed here and there.
For let not such a man himself deceive,
To think that he shall from the Lord receive.
A double-minded man most surely lacketh
Stability in all he undertaketh.
Let ev'ry brother of a low degree
Rejoice in that he is advanc'd, but he
That's rich in being made low, for he shall pass
Away, as doth the flow'r of the grass.
For as the grass, soon as the sun doth rise,
Is scorch'd by reason of the heat, and dies;
Its flow'r fades, and it retains no more }
The beauteous comeliness it had before,
So fades the rich man, maugre all his store. }
The man is blest that doth endure temptation
For when he's try'd, the crown of God's salvation,
The which the Lord hath promised to give
To them that love him, that man shall receive.
Let no man be possest with a persuasion,
To say, when he falls under a temptation,
That God's the cause; for with no evil can
God be tempted, nor tempts he any man.
But every man is tempted when he's drawn
Away, and by his lusts prevail'd upon;
Then when lust bath conceiv'd, it ushereth
In sin, and sin when finished brings death.
Err not, my brethren, whom I dearly love,
Each good and perfect gift is from above,
Down from th' original of lights descending,
With whom's no change, nor shadow thereto tending.
According to his own good pleasure, he }
Begat us with the word of truth, that we }
Should as the first fruits of his creatures be. }
Wherefore, beloved brethren, I entreat
You to be swift to hear, and slow to speak,
And slow to wrath, for wrath cannot incline
The sons of men to righteousness divine.
Wherefore avoiding ev'ry filthiness,
And superfluity of naughtiness:
Receive with meekness the engrafted word,
Which can salvation to your souls afford.
But be ye doers of the word each one,
And not deceive yourselves to hear alone;
For he that hears the word and doth it not,
Is like unto a man that hath forgot

What kind of man he was, tho' in a glass
He just before beheld his nat'ral face.
But whoso minds the law of liberty
In its perfection, and continually
Abides therein, forgets not what he's heard,
But doth the work and therein hath reward.
If any man among you seem to be
Religious, he deceives himself if he
Doth not his tongue as with a bit restrain,
And all that man's religion is but vain.
Religion, pure and undefil'd, which is
Acceptable before the Lord, is this:
To visit widows and the fatherless,
In time of their affliction or distress;
And so to regulate his conversation,
As to be spotless in his generation.

CHAP. II.

Faith of the Lord of glory, Jesus Christ,
Doth with respect of persons not consist ;
For if, my brethren, when there shall come in
To your assembly one with a gold ring,
In goodly clothes, and there shall also be
Another man that's meanly cloth'd, and ye
Shall have respect to him in rich attire,
And say unto him, come thou, sit up higher ;
And bid the poor man stand or sit below, }
Are ye not partial then, and plainly show, }
That you do judge amiss in what you do ? }
Hearken, my brethren, hath not God elected
The poor, who by this world have been rejected ;
Yet rich in faith, and of that kingdom heirs,
Which God will give his foll'wers to be theirs ?
But you, my brethren, do the poor despise.
Do not the rich men o'er you tyrannise ;
And hale ye to their courts ; that worthy name
By which you're call'd do not they blaspheme ?
Then if ye do the royal law fulfil,
To love thy neighbour as thyself, 'tis well,
According to the scripture; but if ye
Shall have respect to persons, ye shall be
Guilty of sin, and by the law condemn'd,
As such who have its righteousness contemn'd.
For he that shall but in one point offend,
Breaks the whole law, whate'er he may pretend.
For he that doth forbid adultery,
Forbids likewise all acts of cruelty.
Now tho' thou be not an adulterer,
Yet if thou kill, thou shalt thy judgment bear.
So speak and do as those men that shall be
Judg'd by the perfect law of liberty :
For he shall judgment without mercy know ; }
That to his neighbour doth no mercy show ; }
And mercy triumphs against judgment too. }
Brethren what profit is't if a man saith
That he hath faith, and hath not works; can faith
Save him ? If any of the brotherhood
Be destitute of clothes or daily food,
And one of you shall say, Depart in peace,
Be warmed or be ye fill'd, ne'ertheless,

Ye do not furnish them with what they need,
What boots it? Thus faith without works is dead.
Yea may a man say, thou dost faith profess,
And I good works, to me thy faith express
Without thy works, and I will plainly show
My faith unto thee by the works I do.
Thou dost believe there is one God, 'tis true,
The devils do believe and tremble too.
But wilt thou know, vain man, that faith is dead,
Which with good works is not accompany'd.
Was not our father Abraham justify'd
By works, and by the same his faith was try'd;
When he his Isaæ to the altar brought;
Seest thou how with his works his faith then wrought?
And with his works he perfected his faith?
And so the scripture was fulfill'd, which saith,
Abraham believed God, and 'twas imputed
For righteousness, and he God's friend reputed.
Thus may you see, that by works ev'ry one
Is justify'd, and not by faith alone.
Thus was the harlot Rahab justify'd
By works, when she the messengers did hide, }
And by another way their feet did guide.
For as the body's dead without the spirit,
So faith without works never can inherit.

CHAP. III.

Affect not, brethren, superiority,
As knowing that we shall receive thereby
The greater condemnation in the end:
For we in many things do all offend.
Who doth not with his tongue offend, he can
Guide his whole body, he's a perfect man.
Behold, in horses' mouths we bridles put,
To rule and turn their bodies quite about.
Behold likewise the ships, which tho' they be
Of mighty bulk, and thro' the raging sea
Are driv'n by the strength of winds, yet they
By a small helm the pilot's will obey.
Ev'n so the tongue of man, which tho' it be
But a small member, in a high degree
It boasts of things. Behold, we may remark
How great a matter's kindled by a spark.
The tongue's a fire, a world of ill, which plac'd
Among the members, often has disgrac'd
All the whole body, firing the whole frame
Of nature, and is kindl'd by hell flame.
All kind of beasts and birds that can be nam'd,
Serpents and fishes, are and have been tam'd
By mankind; but the tongue can no man tame,
A stubborn evil full of deadly bane.
We therewith God the Father bless, and we
Therewith curse men made like the Deity:
Blessing and cursing from the same mouth flow,
These things, my brethren, ought not to be so.
Is any fountain of so strange a nature,
At once to send forth sweet and bitter water?
Can olives, brethren, on a fig-tree grow,
Or figs on vines? no more can water flow }
From the same fountain sweet and bitter too.
He that's endu'd with wisdom and discretion
Amongst you, let that man by the profession
Of meekness, wisely give a demonstration,
Of all his works, from a good conversation.

But if your hearts are full of bitterness
And strife, boast not, nor do the truth profess.
This wisdom is not from above descending,
But earthly, sensual, and to evil tending:
For where there's strife and envyng there's confusion
And ev'ry evil work in the conclusion.
But the true wisdom that is from above,
Is, in the first place, pure, then full of love,
Then gentle and entreated easily, }
Next merciful, without partiality, }
Full of good fruits, without hypocrisy.
And what is more, the fruits of righteousness
Is sown in peace, of them that do make peace.

CHAP. IV.

From whence come wars and fights, come they not hence:
Ev'n from th' inordinate concupiscence
That in your members prompts to variance?
You lust and have not, kill and desire to have;
But ne'ertheless obtain not what you crave.
With war and fighting ye contend, yet have not
The things which you desire, because you crave not;
Ye crave but don't receive, the reason's just,
Ye crave amiss to spend it on your lust.
You that live in adultery, know not ye
The friendship of the world is enmity
With God? He is God's enemy therefore
That doth the friendship of the world adore.
Do ye think that th' scripture saith in vain,
The spirit that lusts to hate, doth in you reign?
But he bestows more grace, wherfore he says,
God scorns the proud, but doth the humble raise.
Unto the Lord therefore submissive be,
Resist the devil and he'll from you flee.
Draw nigh to God, and he'll to you draw nigh.
Make clean your hands you sinners, purify
Your hearts you double-minded, weep and mourn,
And be afflicted, let your laughter turn
To sorrow, and your joy to sadness: stoop
Before the Lord, and he will lift you up.
My brethren, speak not evil of each other;
He that doth judge and speak ill of his brother,
Doth judge and speak ill of the law; therefore
If thou dost judge the law, thou art no more
A doer of the same, but dost assume
The judgment-seat, and art thyself become
A judge thereof. There is but one law-giver,
That's able to destroy and to deliver; }
Who then art thou that dost condemn thy neighbour? }
Go to now, you that say, to such a place
To-morrow will we go, and for the space
Of one whole year, or so, will there remain,
And buy and sell, and get great store of gain:
Whereas ye know not what a day may do.
For what's the life of man? Ev'n like unto
A vapour, which, tho' for a while it may
Appear, it quickly vanisheth away.
So that ye ought to say, If God permit
Us life and health, we will accomplish it.
But now ye glory in your confidence,
Such glorying is of evil consequence.
He therefore that doth know, and doth not act
The thing that's good, doth guilt thereby contract.

CHAP. V.*

Go to now, O ye rich men, howl and cry,
Because of your approaching misery :
Your riches are corrupted, and the moths
Have ent'red, and have eaten up your clothes.
Your gold and silver's canker'd, and the rust
Thereof, shall be an evidence that's just
Against you, and like fire your flesh devour :
Against the last days ye have heap'd up store.
The hire of them that reaped down your field,
The which by you is wrongfully withheld,
Cries, and the voice thereof hath reach'd the ears
Ev'n of the God of sabbath, and he hears.
Your lives in pleasure ye on earth have led,
And as in days of slaughter nourished
Your wanton hearts, and have condemn'd and slain
The just, and he doth not resist again.
Be patient therefore, brethren, ev'n unto
The coming of the Lord : behold, ev'n so
The husbandman expecteth patiently
The precious increase of the earth to see,
With patience waiting till he doth obtain
The showers of early and of latter raiu.
So be ye patient, fixing stedfastly
Your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draws nigh.
Grieve not each other, brethren, lest ye bear
The condemnation ; † lo ! the judge stands near.
The prophets, brethren, who all heretofore
In the name of the Lord their witness bore,

* By a typographical error, in the original edition, it is misprinted CHAP. XLVI.
† How admirably does Bunyan enlarge upon this in his 'Peaceable Principles yet true.'

Take for examples in their sufferings
And patience : they that endure such things,
Ye know are counted blest. Have ye not read
Of Job, how patiently he suffered ?
Have ye not seen in him what was God's end ;
How he doth pity and great love extend ?
My brethren, but above all things forbear,
By heav'n or earth, or otherwise to swear ;
But let your yea be yea, your nay be nay,
Lest ye become reproveable I say.
Let him sing psalms that's merry ; he that's griev'd,
Let him by prayer seek to be reliev'd.
If any of you by sickness be distress'd,
Let him the elders of the church request
That they would come and pray for him a while ;
Anointing him in the Lord's name with oil ;
So shall the pray'r that is of faith restore
The sick, and God shall raise him as before.
And all th' offences which he hath committed
Shall be forgiv'n, and he shall be acquitted.
Confess your faults each one unto his brother,
And put up supplications for each other,
That so you may be heal'd ; the fervency
Of just men's prayers prevails effectually.
Elias was a man as frail as we are,
And he was earnest with the Lord in pray'r,
That there might be no rain, and for the space
Of three years and six months no rain there was :
And afterward, when he again made suit,
The heav'n gave rain, the earth brought forth her fruit.
If any one shall from the truth desert,
And one, my brethren, shall that man convert ;
Let him be sure, that he that doth recall
The poor backsliding sinner from his fall,
Shall save a soul from death, and certainly
Shall hide a multitude of sins thereby.