

Through the Bible

# JAMES I

Zac Poonen



Illustrations by Vinay Kuruville

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**CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH**

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# James

THE LETTER OF JAMES WAS PROBABLY THE **FIRST** AMONG THE BOOKS OF THE **NEW TESTAMENT** TO BE WRITTEN. IT WAS PROBABLY AROUND 16 OR 17 YEARS AFTER THE DAY OF **PENTECOST**.



"**SALVATION IS BY FAITH AND NOT BY WORKS OF THE LAW**" WAS A **NEW** MESSAGE THAT THE **JEWISH CHRISTIANS** WERE HEARING -- AND IT WAS MUCH **MISUNDERSTOOD** THEN, EVEN AS IT IS MISUNDERSTOOD **TODAY**. THEY THOUGHT THAT FAITH WAS **INTELLECTUAL** AND IT NO LONGER MATTERED HOW THEY **LIVED** SO LONG AS THEY "**BELIEVED**" IN **JESUS!**

SO JAMES WROTE HIS LETTER TO CORRECT THAT **ERROR**. JAMES EMPHASISES THAT **TRUE FAITH** WILL **PRODUCE WORKS**.

IN CHAPTER 1, JAMES SPEAKS ABOUT FAITH GIVING US **VICTORY** OVER **TEMPTATION**, SO THAT WE **DO NOT SIN**.



IN CHAPTER 2, HE SPEAKS ABOUT FAITH PRODUCING **LOVE** FOR ALL MEN SO THAT WE ARE NOT **PARTIAL** TOWARDS THE **RICH** OR THE **MIGHTY** IN THE **CHURCH**.

Faith

IN CHAPTER 3 HE SAYS THAT FAITH WILL MAKE US **CONTROL** OUR **SPEECH**.

AND IN CHAPTERS 4 AND 5, JAMES SAYS THAT FAITH WILL **SEPARATE** US FROM THE **SPIRIT** OF THE **WORLD** AND BRING **PURITY** AND **PATIENCE** INTO OUR LIVES.

FAITH IS LIKE MONEY -- THERE IS THE REAL AND THE COUNTERFEIT.



THE LETTER OF JAMES WILL GIVE YOU A GOOD **SCAN** TO CHECK WHETHER YOUR **FAITH** IS REAL OR NOT. IF OUR FAITH IS **COUNTERFEIT** ISN'T IT **BETTER** TO KNOW **NOW** RATHER THAN AT CHRIST'S **JUDGEMENT-SEAT**?

HE BEGINS BY SAYING, "CONSIDER IT ALL **JOY** WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TYPES OF **TRIALS**" (1:2).



IF WE ALLOW THIS **ENDURANCE** TO COMPLETE ITS WORK IN US, IT WILL MAKE US **PERFECT AND COMPLETE**, LACKING IN **NOTHING** (1:4). THE WAY THERE IS THROUGH **TRIAL**.



TRIALS ALSO PRODUCE THE VIRTUE OF **PATIENCE** IN US. WE SAW IN HEBREWS THAT **FAITH** AND **PATIENCE** GO TOGETHER. THEY ARE LIKE THE TWO **LEGS** WE STAND ON.

IN DEALING WITH OUR TRIALS, WHAT WE NEED MOST OF ALL IS **WISDOM**. **ASK** FOR IT. AND HERE IS AN ENCOURAGING WORD: "GOD WILL **NOT SCOLD** YOU" FOR ASKING (1:5 - LB).

BUT IF WE DON'T ASK IN FAITH, THEN JAMES SAYS THAT WE ARE LIKE THE **WAVES** OF THE SEA THAT ARE **TOSSED** HERE AND THERE.

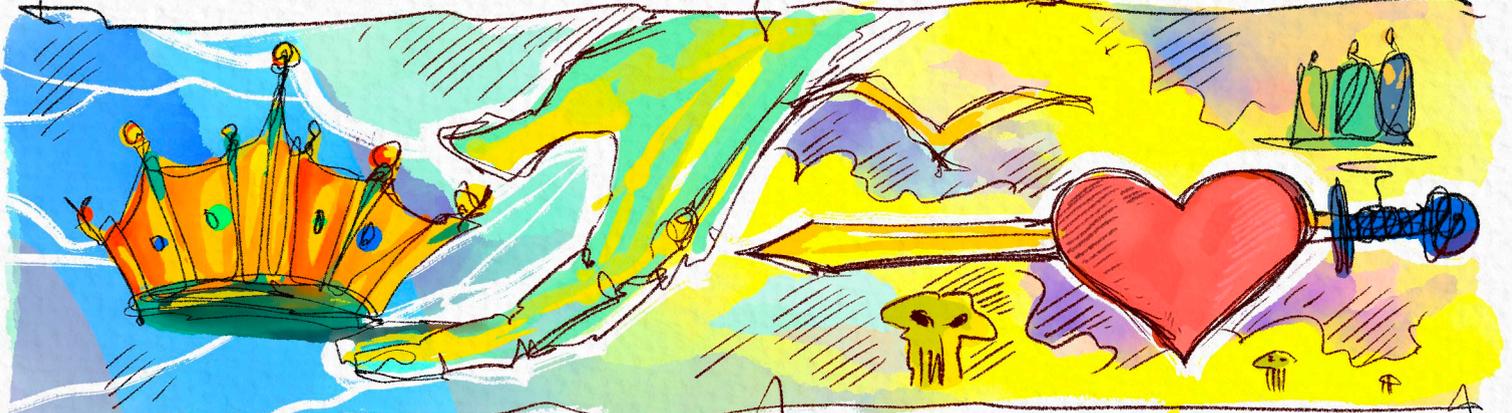
HAVE YOU SEEN ON A **BEACH** HOW THE **WAVES** COME INTO THE BEACH AND THEN GO RIGHT **BACK** AND COME **BACK** AGAIN? A MAN **WITHOUT** FAITH IS LIKE THAT. HE **TRUSTS** IN THE LORD **ONE** MOMENT AND THEN **LOSES** HIS FAITH THE **NEXT** MOMENT.

THOSE WHO **DON'T** HAVE FAITH "WILL RECEIVE **NOTHING** FROM THE LORD" (1:7). HE WON'T GET **FORGIVENESS**, OR THE **BAPTISM** IN THE **HOLY SPIRIT**, OR **ANSWERS** TO PRAYER, OR **GODLINESS**, OR ANY OF GOD'S **SPIRITUAL RICHES**.



JAMES THEN GOES ON TO SPEAK ABOUT A **POOR** BROTHER WHO HAS FAITH. HIS FAITH WILL ENABLE HIM TO **REJOICE** IN "HIS **HIGH POSITION** IN **CHRIST**", EVEN IF HE HAS **VERY LITTLE** OF THIS **WORLD'S GOODS** (1:9).

IN THE SAME WAY, A **RICH** BROTHER WITH FAITH WILL LOOK AT ALL HIS **PROPERTY** AND **MONEY** AND SAY, "ALL OF THIS WILL **PASS AWAY** LIKE THE **GRASS**" (1:10).



NOW HE TALKS ABOUT THE **TEMPTATION TO SIN**. HE SAYS THAT IF YOU KEEP ON **OVERCOMING** IN TEMPTATION, YOU WILL RECEIVE A **CROWN OF LIFE** FROM GOD ONE DAY.

GOD PROMISES THAT TO ALL WHO **LOVE** HIM. THAT TEACHES US THAT IF WE **LOVE** THE LORD WE WILL **FIGHT** AGAINST ALL **TEMPTATIONS TO SIN**.

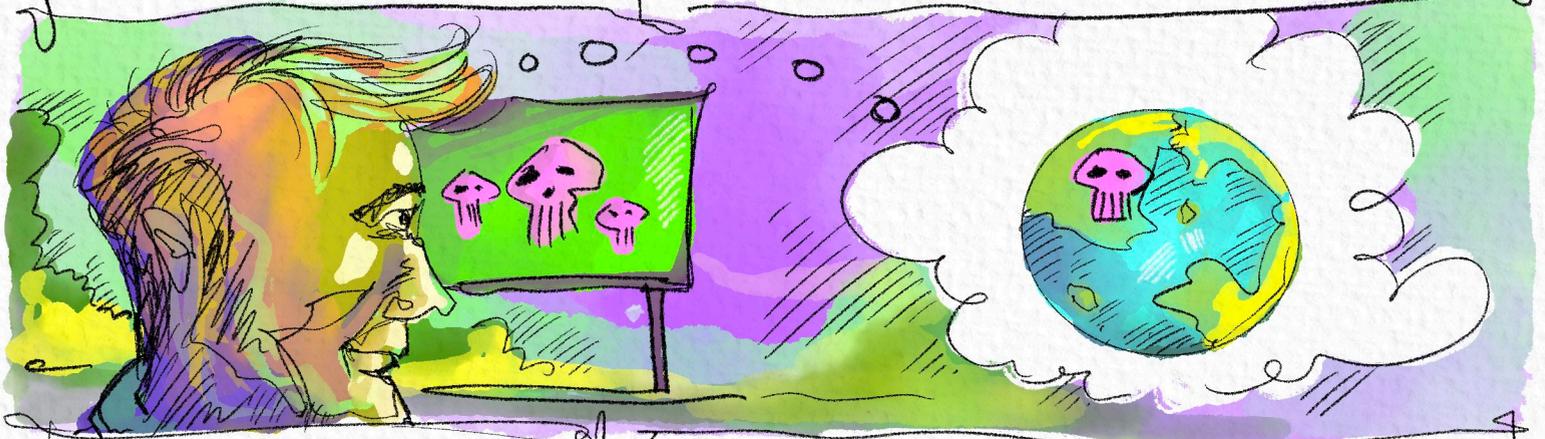
WHEN A TEMPTATION COMES TO YOU, DON'T ASK, "GOD, WHY DID YOU SEND THIS TEMPTATION TO ME?" GOD NEVER SENT IT. GOD **DOESN'T TEMPT** ANYONE. (1:13)





BECAUSE WE HAVE ALL **INDULGED** IN THE **DESIRES** OF OUR **FLESH** FOR SO **MANY** YEARS FROM OUR **CHILDHOOD**, **SATAN** CAN USE THOSE **DESIRES** TO **TEMPT** US.

WHEN A COUNTRY IS AT **WAR**, THE **ENEMY** SENDS THEIR **AGENTS** **SECRETLY** **INSIDE** THE COUNTRY TO CAUSE **DESTRUCTION** FROM **WITHIN**. THE **ENEMY** **FIGHTS** ON **TWO** **FRONTS** -- AT THE **BATTLE** **FRONT** AND ALSO FROM **WITHIN** THE COUNTRY THROUGH ITS **AGENTS**. SO IT IS WITH **SATAN** TOO.



FOR EXAMPLE, AS YOU ARE **WALKING** DOWN THE ROAD, YOU SEE SOMETHING THAT **TEMPTS** YOU. THAT'S NOT A **SIN**. THAT IS **TEMPTATION**. BUT WHEN YOU **LOOK** **AGAIN** AT IT, THEN YOU **SIN**.

WE CANNOT AVOID THE FIRST LOOK BECAUSE WE ARE **LIVING** IN A **WORLD** WHICH HAS SO MUCH **EVIL** ALL **AROUND** US. BUT WE CAN **DECIDE** WHETHER WE **AGREE** WITH THAT **EVIL** OR NOT. IT IS ONLY WHEN YOU ALLOW YOUR MIND TO **AGREE** WITH A **WRONG** **DESIRE** THAT YOU **SIN**. **UNTIL** **THEN** THE **THOUGHT** THAT COMES TO YOUR MIND IS ONLY A **TEMPTATION**.



WHEN YOUR MIND **AGREES** WITH THE **WRONG** **DESIRE** IN YOUR **FLESH**, IT IS LIKE A **WOMAN** **AGREEING** TO GIVE HER **BODY** TO A **MAN** FOR **SEXUAL** **UNION**. THEN A **CONCEPTION** TAKES PLACE. BUT IF THE **WOMAN** **REFUSES** TO GIVE HERSELF TO THE **MAN**, THERE IS **NO** **CONCEPTION**.

SOMEONE HAS SAID, "YOU CANNOT **PREVENT** THE **BIRDS** FROM **FLYING** OVER YOUR **HEAD**, BUT YOU CAN **STOP** THEM FROM **MAKING** A **NEST** IN YOUR **HAIR**." THE **BIRDS** **FLYING** OVER YOUR **HEAD** ARE THE **TEMPTATIONS** -- **MANY** **BAD** **THOUGHTS** THAT COME INTO YOUR MIND.



EVERY GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT COMES ONLY FROM ABOVE -- FROM OUR HEAVENLY FATHER" (1:17). SO VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION CAN NEVER COME FROM WITHIN OURSELVES. IT HAS TO COME FROM ABOVE -- BY HELP THAT COMES FROM OUR FATHER THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE FINAL RESULT OF SIN IS SPIRITUAL DEATH (1:15), AND WE SHOULD NOT BE DECEIVED ABOUT THIS (1:16).



GOD BROUGHT US INTO THE WORLD SO THAT WE MIGHT BE AN EXAMPLE ('FIRST FRUITS') IN THE MIDST OF HIS CREATION.

I was thinking...



THEN JAMES TALKS ABOUT OUR SPEECH. "LET EVERYONE BE QUICK TO HEAR, SLOW TO SPEAK AND SLOW TO ANGER" (1:19). MOST HUMAN BEINGS ARE THE OPPOSITE OF THAT: SLOW TO HEAR, QUICK TO SPEAK AND QUICK TO ANGER.



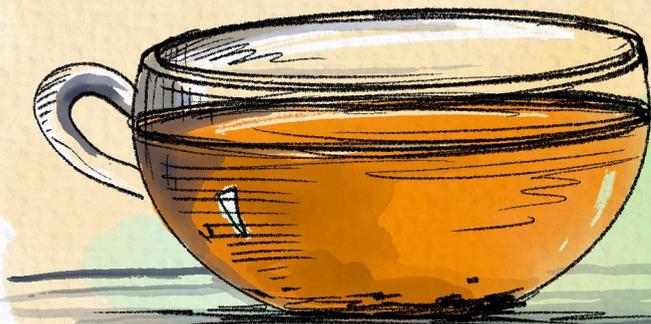
JAMES GOES ON TO SAY THAT WE CANNOT EXPECT TO FULFIL GOD'S PURPOSES BY GETTING ANGRY. ANGER CAN NEVER ACHIEVE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.



WHEN PEOPLE ARE SPEAKING, LEARN TO LISTEN TO THEM PATIENTLY FIRST.



IT IS A CONCERN FOR GOD'S GLORY THAT WILL ACCOMPLISH GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.



IN 1:21, WE ARE EXHORTED TO "PUT ASIDE ALL FILTHINESS AND ALL THAT REMAINS OF WICKEDNESS." EVEN AFTER WE HAVE PUT AWAY ALL FILTHINESS, THERE WILL STILL BE SOME WICKEDNESS REMAINING AT THE BOTTOM. ASK GOD TO SHOW YOU. THEN, "IN HUMILITY ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT GOD SAYS AND IT WILL SAVE YOUR SOUL"



WHEN WE HEAR GOD SPEAK TO US, WE MUST OBEY IMMEDIATELY. OTHERWISE, JAMES SAYS YOU WILL BE LIKE SOMEONE WHO SAW DIRT ON HIS FACE IN THE MIRROR BUT DID NOT WASH IT AWAY.



GOD'S WORD IS A **MIRROR** WHICH SHOWS US THE CONDITION OF OUR HEART. WE COULD SAY THAT GOD'S WORD IS LIKE AN X-RAY OR SCAN, THAT SHOWS US OUR **TRUE INNER STATE**.

AND WHEN GOD SHOWS YOU SOMETHING, SET IT RIGHT AT ONCE. GOD'S WORD IS A **LAW OF LIBERTY** THAT CAN SET US **FREE** (1:25).

IF YOU CANNOT CONTROL YOUR **TONGUE**, YOUR **CHRISTIANITY** IS WORTH **ZERO**. ASK THE **HOLY SPIRIT** TO HELP YOU TO **CONTROL** YOUR TONGUE.

1:27 TELLS US THAT **TRUE CHRISTIANITY** IS INTENSELY **PRACTICAL**. IT IS CARING FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN **NEED**, THE **POOR** AND THE **HELPLESS**. THIS IS A **MAJOR PART** OF **TRUE CHRISTIANITY**.

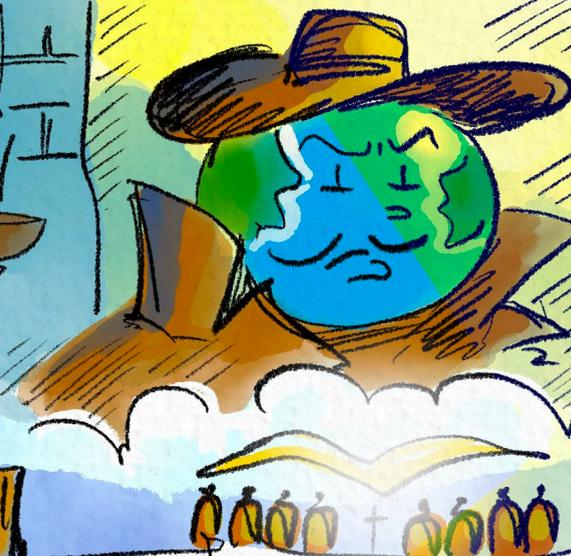


AT THE SAME TIME  
KEEP YOURSELF  
COMPLETELY  
"UNSPOTTED AND  
UNSTAINED BY THE  
WORLD". THIS IS THE  
ESSENCE OF TRUE  
CHRISTIANITY.



IN 2:1, JAMES GOES ON TO SPEAK ABOUT SHOWING **PARTIALITY** TO THE RICH. THIS IS A **MAJOR PROBLEM** IN ALMOST ALL CHURCHES TODAY. BECAUSE A PASTOR NEEDS **FINANCIAL SUPPORT** FROM HIS CONGREGATION, HE ENDS UP **PLEASING THE RICH** PEOPLE THEREIN, SO THAT HE CAN GET THEIR **MONEY** FOR HIS SALARY. SUCH A PASTOR IS AN **EVIL PERSON** (2:4)

ONE WHO  
DESPISES THE  
POOR IS JUST LIKE  
ANY **WORLDLY**  
PERSON WHO  
ALSO TREATS ONLY  
THE **RICH** PEOPLE  
WITH **FAVOUR**.



IN MY YOUNGER DAYS WHEN I **VISITED** DIFFERENT **CHURCHES** (OF ALL DENOMINATIONS), I SAW THAT THE **RICH** AND THE **INFLUENTIAL** PEOPLE WERE ALWAYS THE **BOARD-MEMBERS** OF THE CHURCH. THIS WAS **NOT** BECAUSE THEY WERE **SPIRITUAL**, BUT BECAUSE THEY HAD **HIGH POSITIONS** IN **SOCIETY**.

GOD HAS CHOSEN **POOR** PEOPLE TO BE **RICH** IN **FAITH** AND PROMISED HIS **KINGDOM** TO THEM (2:5).



**RICH** PEOPLE WHO SIT ON THE **BOARD** ARE THE ONES WHO GET **OFFENDED** EASILY AND THEN **DRAG THE CHURCH** TO **COURT**. ONLY **RICH** PEOPLE CAN **DRAG OTHERS** TO COURT, BECAUSE THEY ALONE HAVE THE **MONEY** TO DO THAT.

IT IS THE **RICH** WHO **BLASPHEME** THE NAME OF **JESUS** (2:6, 7).