

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

James said, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (James 1:17–18). I praise you today as the God who delights to give good and perfect gifts to your children. You are the immutable, unchangeable, eternal Father who gave me new birth through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!

Today in Your Word

Today you shared with me the letter that James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote to the believing Jews scattered across the Roman Empire. The letter is filled with instruction on how to live the Christian life, and there is so much practical guidance on how to be more like Jesus. Some of the key takeaways for me were: (1) Trials refine and perfect my faith. This is why James told his readers to “count it all joy” when they encountered various trials. I am called to rejoice, not in the evil which so often causes trials, but in the certainty that you are using my trials to conform me to the image of your Son (Rom 8:28–29). What greater joy can a disciple have than the knowledge that he is becoming more like his master? (2) The faith that saves obeys. James asked his readers, “What good is it if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?” This means that it’s not enough for me to *claim* that I have faith in God. I must demonstrate my faith *by how I live*. When I take your Word seriously and respond in obedience to what you command, I am “justified by works” in the sense that my works show that my faith is genuine. (3) The power of the tongue. James compared the tongue to the rudder of a large ship. A rudder is small, but it has the power to steer the whole vessel. So it is with the tongue—it has great power for good or evil. That’s why I need to be “quick to hear” and “slow to speak.” That’s why I need to be cautious in taking on the role of a teacher. The good news is that your grace is able to do what no man can do—it can tame my tongue. If I yield to the desires of the Spirit, you will help my speech to be “gracious, seasoned with salt” (Col 4:6). (4) Friendship with the world is enmity with God. James rebuked his readers for their interpersonal conflicts, their envy and covetousness, and their selfish desires. ‘Such attitudes and desires,’ James said, ‘come not from God but from the world!’ This reminds me that the world is always trying to squeeze me into its mold. To avoid this, I must humble myself before you and submit to your will. Only then will I find the grace I need to resist the devil and keep my conscience clear. (5) The importance of endurance. James told his readers to be patient and imitate the example of the prophets: “We consider those blessed who remained steadfast.” This means that I’m called to strengthen my heart in your Word and endure to the end by faith. If I remain steadfast like Job, then I will enjoy the final blessing of your compassion and mercy.

Reflection

James was sensitive to the issue of partiality in the church, and he pointed out that when we show partiality, we dishonor those whom you have chosen to be heirs of the kingdom. Now, I may not give the best seat in the house to a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing, but do I avoid interacting with those who are not as well off as I am? Do I show partiality in smaller but no less offensive ways?

Request

Father, help me to be a doer of the Word and not just a hearer. Help me to reach out to those in need and keep myself unstained from the perversion of the world.

Thanksgiving

Thank you for the assurance that if I draw near to you in humility and repentance, you will draw near to me in mercy and grace! Praise God for the cleansing blood of Jesus!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “[He Giveth More Grace](#)” – Annie J. Flint.

Meditation Verse: James 4:17.