THE QUESTION

Why is James so hard on the person who doubts (James 1:6–8)?

Asked by a THF member on May 17, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 13 numbered quotations · the 32 early Christian passages and 161 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/why-is-james-so-hard-on-the-person-who-doubts-james-1-6-8

The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

Early writers read James as a warning against a divided heart. Hermas says those who doubt God are double-minded and receive none of their requests, while those who trust Him receive. They treat this doubt as half-trusting God, like serving two masters, which leaves a person unsteady and grieves the Holy Spirit.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

IN THIS STUDY

1	Doubters are double-minded and receive nothing	**2**
2	God's mercy is the reason not to doubt	**2**
3	Early Christians were taught not to waver	**3**
4	Double-mindedness gives up on God's promises	**3**
5	A divided heart tries to serve two masters	**4**
6	Doubt leaves a person unstable and tossed about	**4**
7	Doubt grieves the Holy Spirit	**5**
	What these passages don't tell us	**5**
	The Sources: 32 early Christian passages and 161 Bible verses, with links	**5**

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POINT 1 OF 7

Doubters are double-minded and receive nothing

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Hermas says almost what James says. The person who doubts God in his heart is double-minded and gets none of his requests. The one who is complete in faith asks trusting the Lord, and receives.

1

"But if you doubt in your heart, you will receive none of your requests. For those who doubt about God are double-minded, and they receive none of their requests."

later in the same passage

"But those who are complete in faith ask for everything, trusting in the Lord, and they receive it, because they ask without doubting and are not double-minded."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) **Source 4, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

God's mercy is the reason not to doubt

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The warning is not meant to scare sinners away from prayer. Hermas says God does not hold grudges and has compassion on His creatures. Clement of Rome says the Father gives His favors to those who come with a simple, undivided mind.

2

"For He is not like people, who remember the wrongs done against them. He Himself does not remember wrongs, and He has compassion on His own creature."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) **Source 4, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

3

"The all-merciful and beneficent Father has compassion towards those who fear Him, and kindly and lovingly bestows His favors upon those who come to Him with a simple mind."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 32, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 7

Early Christians were taught not to waver

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Ignatius applies the warning straight to prayer and calls the one who does not doubt blessed. The Didache lists being double-minded among the things a Christian must not be, next to lying and greed.

4 “Be not double-minded in your prayers; for blessed is he who does not doubt.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistles of Ignatius* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 6, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

5 “You shall not be double-minded or double-tongued, for to be double-tongued is a snare of death.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 2 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 1, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 7

Double-mindedness gives up on God's promises

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Both letters under Clement's name link a double mind with people who stop believing God will keep His word because it seems slow. Their answer is to hope and endure, trusting that He who promised is faithful.

6 “Therefore, my brothers, let us not be of a double mind, but let us hope and endure, so that we also may obtain the reward. For He is faithful who promised that He will give each one a reward according to his works.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *Second Epistle* 11 (c. 88–99 AD) **Source 2, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

7 “Therefore, let us not be double-minded; nor let our soul be lifted up because of His exceedingly great and glorious gifts.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Rome,** *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Source 32, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 5 OF 7

A divided heart tries to serve two masters

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

This links James to Matthew 6:24. Irenaeus says Christ teaches those who serve God not to be ruled by mammon. Clement of Alexandria says one who truly knows God cannot also serve pleasures that pull the other way.

8 “He does not call mammon Lord when He says, "You cannot serve two masters," but He teaches His disciples, who serve God, not to be subject to mammon, nor to be ruled by it.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 10, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

9 “In truth, it is not possible for the one who nobly and truly knows God to serve opposing pleasures.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Stromata* 7.12 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 12, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 7

Doubt leaves a person unstable and tossed about

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

James pictures the doubter as a wave driven by the wind. Clement of Alexandria ties doubt to an unstable, wavering mind. Cyprian uses a similar picture for one who does not do what Christ commands: he is blown about like dust.

10 “But one of the main causes of skepticism is the instability of the mind, which produces disagreement. And disagreement is the immediate cause of doubt.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Stromata* 8.7 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 13, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

11 “He must necessarily waver and wander. Carried away by a spirit of error, like dust shaken by the wind, he will be blown about.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 25, page 7** Read it in the library ›
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POINT 7 OF 7

Doubt grieves the Holy Spirit

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Hermas says that when a doubting man fails because of his doubt, grief enters him and grieves the Holy Spirit who lives in him. He also warns not to start doubting just because an answer is slow in coming.

12 “When the doubting man tries to do any deed, and fails in it because of his doubt, this grief enters into the man, and grieves the Holy Spirit, and crushes him out.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) *THF's updated English* **Source 5, page 6** Read it in the library ›

13 “And if at any time, after you have asked the Lord, you are slower to receive your request than you expected, do not doubt because you have not quickly received what your soul asked for.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hermas,** *Shepherd* (c. 90–150 AD) *THF's updated English* **Source 4, page 6** Read it in the library ›

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not say that every honest question or weak moment of faith is the same as being double-minded.
- They do not explain James 1:5–11 verse by verse or tie the warning to the trials James mentions.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 32 early Christian passages and 161 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–32, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 33–83, in Bible order), then 110 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are

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in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *32 passages from 14 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 2 **Quote 5, page 3** "the second commandment of the Teaching is this: You shall not commit murder. You shall not commit adultery, Exodus 20:13-14. You shall not commit pederasty. You shall not… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome, *c. 88–99 AD · sources 2–3*

2 *Second Epistle* 11 (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 3** "the prophetic word also declares, Wretched are those of a double mind, and who doubt in their heart, who say, All these things have we heard even in the times… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Second Epistle* 6 (1885 English; on point 5) "the Lord declares, No servant can serve two masters… [continues online] **read ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · sources 4–5*

4 *Shepherd* **Quotes 1, 2, 13, pages 2, 5** "yourself with faith, which is strong and powerful… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Shepherd* (1885 English) **Quote 12, page 5** "the doubting man attempts any deed, and fails in it on account of his doubt, this grief enters into the man, and grieves the Holy Spirit, and crushes him out… [continues online] **read ›**

Ignatius of Antioch, *c. 98–117 AD · source 6*

6 *Epistles of Ignatius* (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** "not double-minded in thy prayers; for blessed is he who doubteth not… [continues online] **read ›**

Minucius Felix, *c. 150–270 AD · source 7*

7 *Octavius* 13 (1885 English; on point 6) "if a man has no steadfast judgment of truth, even as his unbelieving suspicion is scattered, so his doubting opinion is unsettled… [continues online] **read ›**

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · sources 8–9*

8 *Diatessaron* 10 (1885 English; on point 5) "Arabic, p. 38] Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *Diatessaron* 13 (1885 English; on point 1) "7:23 And blessed is he who doubts not in me… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · source 10*

10 *Against Heresies: Book III* **Quote 8, page 4** "are God's," naming Cæsar as Cæsar but acknowledging God as God. Similarly, the saying "You cannot serve two masters" is explained by Him: "You cannot serve God and mammon… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 11–15*

11 *Stromata* 4.6 (1885 English; on point 5) "what the saying, No man can serve two masters, God and Mammon?— the Lord so terming the love of money… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Stromata* 7.12 **Quote 9, page 4** "no one can serve two masters, God and Mammon," Matthew 6:24… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Stromata* 8.7 (1885 English) **Quote 10, page 4** "in fine, of selection in what is said to be good and bad… [continues online] **read ›**

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14 *Stromata* 6.12 (1885 English; on point 6) “unstable, and light, and fickle in his desires, like a demon, he becomes a demoniac man… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Stromata* 8.7 (1885 English; on point 6) “is the changefulness and instability of the human mind, whose nature it is to generate dissent, either that of one with another, or that of people with themselves… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 16–20*

16 *On Idolatry* 12 (1885 English; on point 5) “I was under contract. None can serve two lords… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *Against Marcion* 32 (on point 5) Himself makes clear what the two masters are that, He says, cannot be served, Luke 16:13, because while one is pleased, the other must necessarily be displeased. He mentions… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *De Corona* 12 (1885 English; on point 5) “it be You cannot serve God and mammon Matthew 6:24 to devote your energies to mammon, and to depart from God… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *De Spectaculis (On the Shows)* 26 (on point 5) “no one can serve two masters. Matthew 6:24. What fellowship has light with darkness, life with death? 2 Corinthians 4:14… [continues online] **read ›**

20 *On Idolatry* 19 (1885 English; on point 5) “soul cannot be due to two masters— God and Cæsar… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 21–22*

21 *Against Celsus* 56 (on point 5) “no man can serve two masters, and we cannot serve God… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *Against Celsus* 8 (1885 English; on point 5) “this sense does not suit his purpose, it is evident that his endeavours are vain to weaken the authority of the passage, No man can serve two masters… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 23–26*

23 *Treatises* (on point 5) “although it is written, "You cannot serve two masters," Matthew 6:24, he has… [continues online] **read ›**

24 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 6) “such a man can there be one Spirit and one body, in whom perchance there is not even one mind, so slippery, and shifting, and uncertain is it… [continues online] **read ›**

25 *Treatises* (1885 English) **Quote 11, page 4** “must of necessity waver and wander, and, caught away by a spirit of error, like dust which is shaken by the wind, be blown about… [continues online] **read ›**

26 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 6) “he who resists, will of necessity wander in the unsteady course of affairs, and will be tossed here and there by the various and uncertain storms of things… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 27–30*

27 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 3) “double-minded, but grave, continent, sober, pure, avoiding the conversation of many, and especially of those that are of ill reputation… [continues online] **read ›**

28 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 3) “shall not be double-minded nor double-tongued; for a man's own lips are a strong snare to him, Proverbs 6:2 and a talkative person shall not be… [continues online] **read ›**

29 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 3) “ambitious; not double-minded, nor double-tongued; not ready to hearken to calumny or evil-speaking… [continues online] **read ›**

30 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 5) “no one can serve two masters, Matthew 6:24 according to the Lord's admonition… [continues online] **read ›**

Commodianus, *c. 250–300 AD · source 31*

31 *Writings* (1885 English; on point 6) “to the wretched people which wavers with doubtful brow… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *source 32*

32 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* **Quotes 3, 7, pages 2, 3** “bestows His favors upon those who come to Him with a simple mind. Therefore, let us not be double-minded; nor let our soul be lifted up because of His… [continues online] **read ›**

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THE BIBLE *51 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

33 **Deuteronomy 6:5** And you shall love the Lord your God with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. **read ›**

34 **Deuteronomy 6:13** You shall fear the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve; to him you shall cling, and by his name you shall swear. **read ›**

35 **Deuteronomy 11:16** be careful lest your heart be puffed up, and you transgress and serve other gods and worship them, **read ›**

36 **Deuteronomy 17:17** He shall not multiply wives for himself, so that his heart does not turn away; and he shall not greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. **read ›**

37 **Deuteronomy 23:16** He shall dwell with you; he shall dwell among you wherever it pleases him. You shall not oppress him. (Septuagint Deuteronomy 23:17 (Deuteronomy 23:16 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

38 **Deuteronomy 28:14** You shall not turn aside from any of the commandments that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them. **read ›**

39 **Joshua 24:15** But if it does not please you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve, whether the gods of your fathers who were beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But I and my house will serve the Lord, for he is holy." **read ›**

40 **Joshua 24:19** But Jesus said to the people, "You will by no means be able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God; and being jealous, he will not forgive your sins and your lawless deeds, **read ›**

41 **Job 8:14** For his house shall be without inhabitants, and his tent shall turn out to be a spider's web. **read ›**

42 **Jeremiah 4:3** For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and to those who dwell in Jerusalem: Break up new ground for yourselves, and do not sow among thorns. **read ›**

43 **Jeremiah 10:5** they will set them up, and they will not move; it is carved silver, they will not walk; **read ›**

44 **Jeremiah 38:7** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

45 **Ezekiel 17:9** Therefore say: Thus says the Lord: Will it prosper? Shall not the roots of its tenderness and its fruit rot? And all its early shoots shall wither — and not by a great arm nor by many people — so as to tear it up from its roots. **read ›**

46 **Daniel 4:19** Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was stunned for about an hour, and his thoughts troubled him. And Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you, and its interpretation for your enemies. **read ›**

47 **Daniel 11:13** And the king of the north shall return and bring a multitude greater than the first; and at the end of the times of years an invasion shall come with a great army and with many possessions. **read ›**

48 **Daniel 12:9** And he said, "Come, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the end of a time. **read ›**

49 **Hosea 5:9** Ephraim has become a desolation in the days of rebuke; among the tribes of Israel I have shown what is sure. **read ›**

50 **Amos 1:3** And the Lord said: For three ungodly deeds of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away from him, because they sawed the women with child of those in Gilead with iron saws. **read ›**

51 **Amos 9:14** And I will turn back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the cities that were destroyed, and dwell in them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit. **read ›**

52 **Judith 8:14** For you will not find the depth of the heart of a man, nor will you grasp the thoughts of his mind; how then will you search out God, who made all these things, and know his mind, and understand his purpose? No, brothers, do not provoke the Lord our God to anger. **read ›**

53 **Judith 8:23** for our slavery will not be turned to favor, but the Lord our God will make it a dishonor. **read ›**

54 **Wisdom of Solomon 1:3** For crooked thoughts separate from God, and his power, when it is tested, convicts the foolish. **read ›**

55 **Wisdom of Solomon 9:14** For the reasonings of mortals are timid, and our designs are likely to fail. **read ›**

56 **Wisdom of Solomon 14:26** disturbance of the good, forgetfulness of favors, defilement of souls, confusion of sex, disorder in marriage, adultery, and shameless conduct. **read ›**

57 **Wisdom of Sirach 2:12** Woe to cowardly hearts and to slack hands, and to the sinner who walks on two paths! **read ›**

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58 **Wisdom of Sirach 2:13** Woe to the slack heart, for it does not trust; therefore it will not be sheltered. **read ›**

59 **Wisdom of Sirach 3:7** and he will serve his parents as masters. **read ›**

60 **Wisdom of Sirach 5:1** Do not set your mind on your wealth, and do not say, “I have enough.” **read ›**

61 **Wisdom of Sirach 5:10** Be firmly fixed in your understanding, and let your word be one and the same. **read ›**

62 **Wisdom of Sirach 8:2** Do not contend with a rich man, lest he throw his weight against you; for gold has destroyed many, and turned aside the hearts of kings. **read ›**

63 **Wisdom of Sirach 18:7** When a man has finished, then he is beginning; and when he stops, then he will be at a loss. **read ›**

64 **Wisdom of Sirach 20:15** He gives little and insults much, and opens his mouth like a herald; today he lends, and tomorrow he will demand it back; such a man is hateful. **read ›**

65 **Wisdom of Sirach 22:18** Stakes set up on a height will certainly not stand against the wind; so a cowardly heart with a fool’s thoughts will certainly not stand against any fear. **read ›**

66 **Wisdom of Sirach 28:9** And a sinful man will trouble friends, and he casts slander among those who are at peace. **read ›**

67 **Wisdom of Sirach 34:1** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

68 **Wisdom of Sirach 42:24** All things are in pairs, one set against the other, and he has made nothing lacking. **read ›**

69 **4 Maccabees 16:22** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

70 **1 Enoch 94:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

71 **1 Enoch 101:4** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

72 **Matthew 4:10** Then Jesus said to him, “Get behind me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve.’” **read ›**

73 **Matthew 6:19** Do not lay up treasures for yourselves on the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal; **read ›**

74 **Matthew 6:24** No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Mammon. **read ›**

75 **Luke 4:8** Jesus answered him, “Get behind me, Satan! It is written: You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve.” **read ›**

76 **Luke 16:13** No household slave can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to one and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and mammon.” **read ›**

77 **Romans 14:23** But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because it is not of faith; and whatever is not of faith is sin. **read ›**

78 **James 1:6** But let him ask in faith, without any doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. **read ›**

79 **James 1:7** For that man should not think that he will receive anything from the Lord. **read ›**

80 **James 1:8** He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. **read ›**

81 **James 3:2** For we all stumble in many things. Anyone who does not stumble in word is a perfect person, able to bridle the whole body also. **read ›**

82 **2 Peter 2:14** having eyes full of adultery and unable to cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, with hearts trained in covetousness—accursed children! **read ›**

83 **Jude 1:22** And have mercy on some, making a distinction; **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *110 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Deuteronomy 22:10 · 26:18

Nehemiah 8:10

Psalms 26:2

Proverbs 14:8

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Isaiah 40:3 · 61:3

Jeremiah 17:10 · 24:1 · 29:12

Malachi 3:1

Matthew 4:9 · 4:21 · 5:4 · 5:5 · 5:8 · 5:19 · 5:40 · 6:6 · 6:16 · 6:25 · 6:28 · 6:31 · 6:32 · 7:7 · 7:13 · 7:21 · 8:5 · 9:9 · 9:13 · 10:37 · 10:39 · 10:41 · 12:7 · 16:24 · 16:26 · 16:27 · 19:21 · 19:26 · 19:27 · 21:22 · 26:28 · 26:52

Mark 1:19 · 2:14 · 8:34 · 8:36 · 10:29 · 12:29

Luke 1:37 · 3:12 · 5:10 · 5:29 · 6:20 · 6:30 · 7:1 · 9:23 · 9:59 · 9:62 · 12:20 · 12:22 · 12:28 · 12:30 · 12:33 · 13:32 · 14:25 · 14:26 · 14:27 · 14:28 · 16:11 · 16:12 · 16:15 · 16:16 · 16:17 · 18:1 · 18:22 · 18:27 · 19:8

John 12:25 · 14:15 · 16:22 · 16:33 · 18:36 · 20:28

Acts 16:16

Romans 3:3 · 9:15 · 12:8 · 14:17 · 15:4

1 Corinthians 7:25 · 7:34 · 10:24

2 Corinthians 4:14 · 6:10 · 7:10 · 8:12 · 10:4

Ephesians 4:30

Philippians 4:4

Colossians 3:5

1 Thessalonians 5:16

1 Timothy 6:20

2 Timothy 2:5

Hebrews 9:14 · 10:37

James 1:5 · 4:11

2 Peter 3:3

1 John 5:14

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Why is James so hard on the person who doubts (James 1:6–8)?” on May 17, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY