

**JAMES 5**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to James chapter 5 as we continue our study through the Word of God, and we finish up this very challenging book.

As we open up, James is going to deal with the unsaved rich and they may have been religious, but their god was their riches.

And because James is speaking of those whose money *was* their god, those who were living like this life was all there is and there is no life beyond the grave - to these he has some pretty strong words of condemnation. He is not speaking to believers here, but this obviously can be applied to us as well.

Poole put it like this, *“He speaks to them not simply as rich (for riches and grace sometimes may go together) but as wicked, not only wallowing in wealth, but abusing it to pride, luxury, oppression, and cruelty.”*

One writer put it like this in his commentary on James. He wrote,

Actually James’ invective [criticism] is aimed at his wealthy nonbelieving countrymen who were exploiting the poor, many of whom were in the church. Specifically, James’ targets were wealthy farmers who owned large tracts of land and were squeezing everyone and everything for profit. But though these persons were the calloused unbelieving rich, the message is also meant to benefit the church. James understood that the natural human tendency to envy the rich, if sustained, would lead many Christians astray.

Thus, this scathing warning to the ungodly rich is also meant to steel [strengthen] his people against such folly. In addition, James' terrifying description of the judgment awaiting these rich countrymen is meant to ensure the exploited poor that justice is coming and they ought to bear their indignities with patience.

This is a timely message for us as we all live under the lure of "the Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" – the seductive delusion that "you are what you buy." May the Holy Spirit help us to step inside James' smoldering human spirit, hear the hammer blows as he pounds the arrogant rich, and allow those blows to shape our lives as well.

- R. Kent Hugues, James – Faith That Works, pp. 211-212

Money, riches are not evil, but Paul tells us that the love of money is evil because it will cause you to do all kinds of wicked things to obtain it. It is a warning to be careful.

Jesus made this powerful point in Matthew 16:26, "**For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**"

Think about that one for a minute. You can be the wealthiest man in the world and not know Christ and the reality is, you are the poorest man in the world. You can't take your wealth with you, but you can use it to bring glory to God and build up His Kingdom, bring the Gospel message to the lost.

And you can have all those riches for 60, 70, 80 years or maybe even just a little bit longer, but in the end, once you die, they are gone from your life and apart from Christ, you will have an eternity think about what you lost, what you gave away to gain just a little bit more money!

Listen to what Paul said, and I did speak a little on this already, but listen to what the Scriptures are saying in I Timothy 6:6-10 regarding contentment and not being content. He wrote, **“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”**

You see, can we be content in what God has given to us? If not, then we can allow riches, even Christians can do this, to cause us to do things to obtain riches that are wrong, and they will be a trap and trip up our Christian walk. It was so bad that Paul warned Timothy that, **“... some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”**

Now, in saying all that, that is not the real focus of this chapter. You see, the real focus here in James chapter 5 is this, - ***THE BELIEVER AND THE SECOND COMING.***

Now many don't focus on this issue, but I think that is what we are going to see. James is going to show us how we are to live out our faith and it should spur us on to have a walk that is according to the high calling by which we have been called because the Lord is coming back and it looks like He is coming back soon!

In fact, we see that point very clearly in James 5:8 where he wrote, **“You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”**

I think this just makes sense. As the Lord's return draws close, we should live accordingly.

John made that point in I John 3:2-3 as he said, **“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**

So, as we will see, James continues to hit us hard tonight, causing us to examine our faith, make us do a heart check to see how we are doing spiritually speaking.

Here in James chapter 5 we can break these verses down into three sections.

First of all, in James 5:1-6 he speaks of *SHARING IN OUR POSSESSIONS*.

Then in James 5:7-12 he speaks of *SHARING IN OUR PATIENCE*.

And he concludes this letter by looking at *SHARING IN OUR PRAYERS* in James 5:13-20.

So with that said, let’s begin reading in James chapter 5, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as the Lord calls us to a new life, to have a walk that is according to the high calling by which we have been called!

## **JAMES 5**

### **VERSES 1-3**

In hearing what James is saying here, let me ask you this. How many churches would want James to speak to their people with a message like this?

I think you can see clearly that James would have a hard time speaking in many churches today because he doesn’t have a positive message, he is not being seeker-sensitive, he would offend people!

We need to keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is speaking through James and thus, this is a message God wants us to hear and apply to our lives!

And the point is this. Don't depend on your wealth, your resources but be totally dependent upon God and His resources!

It is the opposite of what the world believes, and that philosophy of the world is creeping into the church, don't let it get in.

Depend upon the Lord to be the strength of your life, the one who will supply your needs!

And notice how James opens up chapter 5, it is a very strong and condemning language against the ungodly rich and he is calling for them to "**weep and howl**" while they are on this earth or while they are still alive!

Please understand that the word "**weep**" mans to "*wail loudly.*"

And the word "**howl**" is not just a lament, but it speaks of "*shrieking*" or "*screaming.*"

We see this played out for us in the Old Testament, where we are told in Isaiah 13:6, "**Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.**"

They were saying that this is what the ungodly will be like as God's judgment would be poured out upon them and that is what James is saying here.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 13:41-42, "**The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**"

Let me paraphrase what James is saying here. ***“To you rich and godless people, you need to weep and howl now because of what is coming for you, the judgment of God in Hell someday. And thus, while there is time, while you are still alive on this earth, you still have time to repent and receive Christ!”***

And if you really think about this, James is speaking to most American’s today who don’t know Christ and for those that are poor, they too need to weep and howl because apart from Christ, they will face the judgement of God in Hell as well!

Now, as we look at these verses here in James chapter 5, we see that James is speaking of three different types of wealth that people hoard instead of share.

He first speaks of their riches being corrupted or rotten fruit. It is speaking of their food and how they were hoarding it instead of sharing it and as they did that it just got rotten, and it was good for nothing. Think of the food we waste in the country!

One writer put it like this.

***“In extrabiblical Greek, sēpō was used to describe rotten wood, decayed flesh, and rotten fruit. James indicts the wicked rich for uselessly hoarding food (meat, grains, fruit, etc.) that would inevitably rot. Like the rich fool in our Lord’s parable (Luke 12:16–21), they believed their hoarded food would allow them to “take [their] ease, eat, drink and be merry” for years to come - but in the end, it would only rot and be of no use to anyone.”***

Next, James speaks of garments or clothes that are put in a closet because some day we might use them and we come back to find the moths have feasted on them or the 70’s clothes really aren’t coming back! Isn’t it amazing the clothes we hoard in our closets!

Lastly, James speaks of gold and silver becoming corrupted. This can speak of money and possessions that we hoard. And, in the end, we never found a use for that eight-track player or whatever!

You see, we store things up, hoarding our wealth and in the end, instead of being used for the Kingdom of God it rots, moths eat it, and it rusts away!

When you move, you can see the reality of things we have that we have not used in years!

In fact, we have storage units that we rent each month for stuff that we can't fit in our house and we don't use, but we are keeping it just in case. And look at how many of these storage units have gone up in Manitowoc, our small town!

Now, Jesus put things into perspective for us when He said in Matthew 6:19-21, **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

Now you may be thinking, *“Okay, then how much is too much? Where do I draw the line? What is the cutoff point?”*

Folks, that is between you and the Lord. The focus here is hoarding what the Lord has given to you.

If you are unsure, bring it to the Lord. Remember what James said, **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”** James 1:5.

And, as I have said, I believe that James is speaking of religious churchgoers who have a form of godliness but deny its power, they were not saved, and their actions reflected that.

And James tells us God will judge them and all they have hoarded in this life will be a witness against them and it will rot away, the moths will eat it, it will rust away. All they have put so much faith in will be lost!

A powerful example of this is seen in Luke 12:13-21 as Jesus gives to us the Parable of the Rich Fool.

We are told, **“Then one from the crowd said to Him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’ But He said to him, ‘Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?’ And He said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’ Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, “What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?” So he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’” But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”**

Where is your treasure at because where your treasure is, that is where your heart is at!

And folks, we might not be able to hoard things in this life to take with us in the next life, in heaven, but we can send it on ahead, the gifts we give to God to build up His Kingdom are everlasting gifts, they will never fade away!

VERSES 4-6

James now speaks of the injustices the rich perpetrate upon the poor, how they take advantage of them because they have no power, no influence.

Here in James 5:4 we see James speak of the - ***STEALING OF WAGES!***

How did they do that? Well, first of all, back then, there were only the rich and the poor. And the poor depended on the rich to hire them and pay them. And the common practice was that they would work all day and then, at the end of the day they would get paid.

But the rich were taking advantage of the poor, they were not paying them at the end of the day. And they should have known better because the Scriptures were very clear on this, they were not to hold back wages from someone who has worked for you! This practice was forbidden by God!

We see this in Leviticus 19:13 where we are told, **“You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.”**

And notice who is watching what they are doing. James tells us, **“... the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”**

This title, **“Lord of Sabaoth”** is not the same as we read in Mark 2:28 and Luke 6:5, where it says, **“Lord of Sabbath.”**

The idea here is **“Lord of Hosts”** or the ***“Lord of armies.”***

It is describing God as the commander-in-chief you might say, of the heavenly armies! He is the One watching what you are doing, and He is watching over those who are being taken advantage of. Nothing gets past the Lord!

One commentator explained it like this, *“Sabaoth is an untranslated Greek word which derives from the Hebrew word tsaba meaning “hosts,” or “armies.” The phrase the Lord of Sabaoth describes God as Commander of the armies of heaven. He is the One who hears the cries of the defrauded poor and will call His angelic armies to act in judgment - a frightening judgment awaits those who unjustly hoard the wealth they rob from the poor. Their victims will cry out for justice to the Righteous Judge and He will not disappoint them.”*

Once again this is a serious warning to those who are taking advantage of others, holding back their due pay.

Then, as we move on, in James 5:5 we see James speak of - **EXTRAVAGANT LIVING!**

Let’s face it, American’s spend lots of money on extravagant living and in the end, they don’t get much in return. Let me give you this example.

Did you know that the average cost of an American wedding was \$33,900 in 2020, according to the most recent figures!

Now, don’t fret, because it is cheaper in Wisconsin. It would only cost you \$27,800 to get married in Wisconsin!

I am not saying we shouldn’t have weddings, but imagine, \$33,900 for one day! You could put a large down payment on a house with that and have something that will last!

And the idea with what James is saying is that this kind of living is the focus of your life. That is all you have in mind, the next pleasure, the next luxury, the next this and the next that but you have not prepared for eternity!

And the last point, in James 5:6, we are told of – **INJUSTICES!**

And the idea here is the injustices that are perpetrated upon the poor. How the rich take advantage of them.

Why is that?

Because they have no power, they have no influence over people, not like the rich do.

We saw how James spoke of the rich taking advantage of the poor in regard to their wages, that they did not pay them at the end of the day like they were supposed to do. And the poor counted on this to provide for their families!

The word “**condemn**” here in James 5:6, in the Greek means, “*to pass sentence upon.*”

In other words, the poor man could not win in a court case because the cards were stacked against him.

Imagine, the poor man going to court, has the evidence that his boss, this rich man had not paid him, and he loses the court case because the rich man paid the judge off. It happened!

And sometimes the poor man was accused of wrongdoing!

And when James says that “**you have murdered the just**” I think the idea is that these people could starve to death because their wages have been held back and the court system refused to help them out because they were wicked as well!

And I think James makes that point very clear because he calls this poor man who was taken advantage of as being “**just**” or innocent of any wrong doing and yet, he was railroaded by his wicked employer and the unjust judge!

And there was really no recourse, or as James put it, “**he does not resist you.**” He was helpless in this.

Often those who are poor and without power in this world have little satisfaction from justice. Yet God hears their cries, and He is the one who guarantees to ultimately right every wrong and answer every injustice.

Let me also say this. Just because a person is rich doesn't mean they are evil but there is a stronger propensity towards evil for them. The rich try to gain their wealth unjustly. They spend it to fulfill their lustful desires. They acquire it ruthlessly. And there will be coming a judgment for them.

But keep in mind that Jesus had some rich friends who did follow after Him. There was Joseph of Arimathea, Zacchaeus, but riches do present a problem for many – they get in the way of some coming to the Lord. And folks, most people in the United States are richer than people throughout this world!

Now, can we as Christians lose our perspective in regard to wealth, possessions?

Of course we can and thus, we need to learn the lesson and seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, to make that a priority in our life and God will give to us the things we need in this life to fulfill His purpose, His plan in us and through us! But it is a battle! And again, the focus here in these verses was – ***SHARING IN OUR POSSESSIONS!***

#### VERSES 7-8

How important this is for us! The focus here is – ***SHARING IN OUR PATIENCE!***

Think about all that we have seen this past year, all the injustice that not only goes on in our nation, but throughout this world, it is easy to lose hope.

For these persecuted believers who were enduring hardships because they loved the Lord, James tells them to hang in there, the Lord's return is close at hand.

It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58, "**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**"

You see, don't give up, the Lord is working, and He is coming back, just be patient!

And that word, we see three times in these two verses, and "**patient**" is the Greek word *hupomonē*, which literally mean "*to remain under*" and speaks of "*endurance under great stress*" or "*perseverance under pressure.*"

In other words, this **patience** means "*to stay put and stand fast when you'd like to run away.*"

We are not to run away from these difficult times, but hang in there, forge ahead, do the work that God has called us to do.

And to paint this picture, James gives to us a picture of a farmer who plants his crop and waits patiently for it to grow, mature until he can harvest it. He doesn't plant it one day and then go out the next day expecting to harvest it or even see it growing yet.

The early rains, coming in late October or early November would soften the ground to prepare for planting.

The later rains came in late April or May and it would help mature the crop before the harvest.

James wants us to learn patience through this, that God will send the rains as they are needed in our lives to prepare us for His return!

Be prepared because His return is getting closer and thus, it should cause us to live our lives according to His Word, being guided by His Spirit!

In other words, no matter what you see, no matter how bad it is going to get, don't lose heart but wait upon the Lord, He is coming back!

Charles Spurgeon put it like this, *“A man to whom it is given to wait for a reward keeps up his courage, and when he has to wait, he says, ‘It is no more than I expected. I never reckoned that I was to slay my enemy at the first blow. I never imagined that I was to capture the city as soon as ever I had digged the first trench; I reckoned upon waiting, and now that is come, I find that God gives me the grace to fight on and wrestle on, till the victory shall come.’ And patience saves a man from a great deal of haste and folly.”*

How true that is. God has told us what it is going to be like in the last days and I think we are seeing it in the days we are living in. Thus, don’t give up, don’t hide away, but continue doing the work until the Lord returns, and that day, as I have said, is getting closer!

#### VERSE 9

Let’s think about this for a minute. If we are not looking up, if our eyes are not focused upon the Lord, we will start looking outward at each other and we will begin to focus on their faults, we will start complaining how other Christians are treating us!

And as we begin to do that, as we begin to grumble and complain the unity that Christ has given to us as brethren, will be destroyed and the work that God wants to do in us and through us will come to a halt!

Listen to what Jesus prayed for prior to His going to the cross of Calvary for us in John 17:20-23, **“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”**

Thus, if we are not focused on the Lord, we are going to be in trouble, and it will be seen in our actions.

Paul gives us this insight of where we are to be focused, what we are to put on, and what we are to let go in Colossians 3:1-17, where he wrote, **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on**

**tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”**

Whatever you are focused upon, that will be manifested in your life!

Let me ask you this, to kind of put it in perspective for us. What happens when things heat up, the pressure is increased in our lives, tough times come our way?

We tend to be less loving and more grumbling, more critical, we tend to groan more against our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Folks, if we can't get along with our family in Christ, how in the world are we going to love the unsaved?

Don't allow hardships to cause you to be unloving towards each other for Jesus is coming back, the Judge is coming and Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:10, **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”**

Thus, look up to God and look out in love towards others, He is coming soon, be patient! He is standing at the door!

VERSES 10-11

I think that as we look at the faith of our brothers and sisters in the Lord, what they endured, it will strengthen our faith as we go through difficult times.

Paul spoke of the suffering of the men and women of faith in Hebrews chapter 11. He wrote, “**. . . Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented - of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.**” Hebrews 11:35b-38.

They looked ahead to the promise of the Messiah, even though they did not see that promise come to pass in their lifetime. They trusted God and walked by faith no matter what came their way!

That is what James is doing here, he is basically saying, *“Hey guys, I know it is tough. I know it is hard. I know the persecution is growing but hang in there. Not only is the Lord coming back but look at the examples of the prophets and what they endured for their faith. May that be an encouragement to you!”*

One of the examples he gives to us is Job who lost his business, his livestock, his servants, his family, and finally his health. He lost it all and yet God was teaching him lessons of faith through this all as he suffered, God was testing his faith!

And through it all Job learned the lesson and in Job chapter 42 we are told, starting in verse 10, **“And the LORD restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold. Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. . . . After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations. So Job died, old and full of days.”** Job 42:10-13, 16-17.

God was compassionate and merciful to him.

Now, how many of you, as you are in the midst of a trial, feel the compassion and mercy of God upon your life?

I have a feeling that most of us don’t see it in the midst of the trial, but we should.

Listen to the perspective that David had as he went through hard times.

In Psalm 27:13-14 we are told, **“I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living. Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!”**

You see, as you have a correct perspective of God, you can see the goodness of God as you live out your life no matter what you are going through. I truly believe the goodness of God and in the end, I know He is coming back to set up His Kingdom on this earth and righteousness will flow throughout the land! perspective is everything!

VERSE 12

What is James speaking of here? It seems out of place as he has been speaking about suffering and enduring those difficult times that come upon us and thus, what is this about an oath?

I think the idea here is that we can cause others to suffer when we give them our word, maybe even strengthen what we have said by giving an oath, and then we don't keep it.

And these words echo what Jesus said in Matthew 5:34-37, **“But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.”**

First of all, the Bible doesn't forbid the use of oaths, only deceptive oaths.

The problem was that many Jewish people in the time James wrote this letter, made distinctions between *“binding oaths”* and *“non-binding oaths.”*

What do I mean by that? The oaths that did not include the name of God were considered non-binding, and to use such oaths was a way of *“crossing your fingers behind your back”* when giving someone your word with an oath, and it was these kinds of oaths that Jesus and James condemned.

Thus, James is saying that in light of the Lord's return, live a life of integrity! Do what you say you will do because the Righteous Judge is coming back!

Again, the focus is this – ***SHARING IN OUR PATIENCE!***

VERSES 13-14

There are three things that James is admonishing these believers and us to manifest in our lives in these two verses. And beginning here and through the rest of this letter, the focus is this –

***SHARING IN OUR PRAYERS!***

The first point is this, as James tells us, “**Is anyone among you suffering? . . .**” James 5:13.

James uses the Greek word, KAKOPATHEO, (kak-op-ath-eh-o’) for “**suffering**” and this is not dealing with a sickness but more of an emotional suffering.

In other words, those who are enduring evil treatment by people, the persecution that they are facing, the abuse that they are encountering, they are just being treated wickedly, and it is affecting them emotionally!

So, if you are suffering, if you are facing difficult times, if you feel that you just don’t know what to do because of all that is coming down upon you, then ***PRAY!***

The next point that Paul makes almost seems out of place. Paul says, “**. . . Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.**” James 5:13.

I think what James is saying fits in beautifully. You see, there are some in the church who are suffering, and they need to pray. There are also some in the church who are cheerful, and they need to ***PRAISE THE LORD!***

The word that James uses for “**cheerful**” is the Greek word, EUTHUMEO, (yoo-thoo-meh’-o) and it is speaking of those who have a joyful attitude. Again, this is not speaking of those who are physically well but well in spirit you might say.

And as you look at these two points, they do go hand-in-hand. You see, one is to plead with God for comfort during the difficult time that they are facing. The other is to sing praises to God for the comfort that they have received!

Next, James tells us, “**Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.**” James 5:14.

Here we see James tell us that if you are sick you need to *CALL FOR THE ELDERS*.

And this sickness is bad, there is no hope outside of God and the call for the elders to pray and anoint them with oil for healing is what needs to be done. This is not a bad cold, not that you can't pray for a bad cold, but specifically here, it is a deadly disease.

And notice where the responsibility falls, it is the one who is sick, not the elders, they are to make the call. And if they can't, then a family member needs to call the elders.

And the reason I see it as more than just the pastor or one man is because then God gets the credit, not man in the healing.

The anointing oil is just a point of contact for a person's faith to be released; it symbolizes the oil of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon our lives!

Now the word for “**anoint**” is the common word that is used for “*massage*” and we see this same word used in Mark 16:1, where the women wanted to prepare the body of Christ for burial, to anoint the body with oil.

And James may be speaking of massaging the body with oil as oil was a common medicine in that day. I tend to lean that this is speaking of physical sickness, even though some see this as more of an emotional issue, and that the oil could be massaged into the body or just placed upon them. I think this is a sickness that is deadly!

VERSES 15-16

Now, when James says, “**And the prayer of faith will save the sick . . .**” in James 5:15, is he saying that everyone will be healed?

No, James is not promising that everyone would be healed, that goes against what the Scriptures teach us.

And I think that James is speaking of physical healing and spiritual healing, I believe he is speaking of both.

We should pray in faith that God will heal and then leave it in His hands that His will is done in the situation.

In I John 5:14-15 we see this principle spoken of as John tells us, “**Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.**”

That is the key. It is His will and not mine or not yours. Let’s face it, God knows what is best and we are only looking at things shortsighted. He sees the big picture.

Now is sickness always a result of sin?

Well, I guess in part for original sin allowed the death process to come into this world but it is not that the person sinned and that is why they are sick, that is not always the case.

In John 9:1-3 we see this example. We are told, “**Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.’**”

You see, in their minds sickness was a result of sin in the person's life, but Jesus says that is not always the case.

But sickness can be the result of sin in our life. In John chapter 5 Jesus healed a lame man and in John 5:14 we are told, **“Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, ‘See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.’”**

Jesus seems to indicate that this man's sickness was the result of his sin and not to go down that path because next time it will be worse!

What should we do?

Pray for them because Jesus will forgive our sins and their sins, and He does heal us according to His will.

Then, in James 5:16 we seem James speaking of confessing our sins to each other and he is not speaking of going to a priest to confess your sins.

Then what is his point?

That we don't isolate ourselves in sin because that is what usually happens, that is what most people do.

But we need to find a mature person who will pray with us and help us through this time.

For men, find another brother in the Lord to pray with and for women, find another sister in the Lord you can pray with.

Be wise in the partner you pick; you don't want someone who is a gossip but someone who will take your need to the Lord with you.

And when we pray, we need to do so with fervent prayer.

In other words, our prayer should be strong as we pray for those who are struggling in their faith.

It is as Peter tells us in I Peter 4:7-11, **“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”**

We can’t take away a person’s sins, only Jesus can but we can forgive them and pray for them!

I think James’ statement, **“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”** is a general statement concerning the power of prayer in all situations not just in the context we’ve been speaking about.

And the reason I say that is because of how James uses Elijah to illustrate his point. Look at the next few verses and you will see what I mean.

### VERSES 17-18

When we think of Elijah and how God used him, we don’t compare!

And yet, James tells us that he was a man whose nature was no different than ours, we are no different.

The same struggles, the same pressures, the same failures that we experience so did Elijah and yet, when he prayed, he did so fervently, and God answered his prayer. He prayed for the rain to stop and it did, it stopped raining for 3 years and six months!

Then he prayed again, and it rained!

This shows that Elijah's heart was in tune with God's. He prayed for the rain to stop and start only because he sensed it was in the heart of God in His dealings with Israel.

Thus, as we pray may we be sensitive to what the Lord desires, that His will be done and not ours!

You see, we too are men and women who have the power of prayer like Elijah as we seek the Lord and His will!

### VERSES 19-20

If you really love the brethren, when one goes astray, wanders from the truth, you will confront them in love with the desire of seeing them return.

Now, just because you reach out to them, doesn't mean they will respond and return, the choice is theirs.

Over the years I have experienced that with people involved in sin and in false doctrine, they just don't want to listen to what the Scriptures are saying but they end up listening to teachers who are leading them astray or they go by their own feelings, which is not good!

But even if they don't listen, you pray and love them with the idea of restoration and then leave it in the hands of God. It is not always easy to do this but if you truly love the brethren, you will step out and minister to them, drawing them back.

Let me explain it like this,

James graphically presents apostasy as a very real possibility in the opening phrase of verse 19: *“My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth . . .”*

The Greek word for “*wander*” is *planao*, from which we derive the word “*planet*,” a heavenly wanderer. James sees some believers as potentially cut loose from the church and wandering alone across a desolation. But he does not see this wandering as unconscious or absent-minded. Moreover, this is not simply a doctrinal wandering from the truth, but a wandering lifestyle. The Hebrew mind, and especially that of James, never separated the *intellectual* from the *behavioral*, or the *doctrinal* from the *moral*, as the Greeks did. Truth was something people did (John 3:21, NASB).

Thus apostasy could be discerned in two ways: doctrinal aberration or moral deviation. In fact, the Bible teaches that a moral deviation can, and often does, affect one’s doctrine.

Thousands today change what they believe to accommodate their moral behavior. On the other hand, thousands more take up false doctrine, then apostatize in their actions.

In the New Testament we read of Demas forsaking Paul for moral reasons: “*He loved this world*” (2 Timothy 4:10). On the other hand, Alexander the metalworker did Paul great harm because he objected to his doctrine - “*he strongly opposed our message*” (2 Timothy 4:15). . . .

As Christians who care for the church, we ought to be sensitive to moral changes in our own behavior and (while avoiding judgmentalism) be sensitive to changes in our brothers and sisters. In our day moral wandering may be as sure an indication of apostasy as mental theological wandering.

- R. Kent Hughes, James – Faith That Works, pp. 276-277

I think he is correct when he says that many times moral failure leads to doctrinal error. And the reason is very simple. When a person is involved in sin, they are a Christian, the Word of God objects to what they are doing. And I should not say objects, call it what it is, a sin, and they make excuses why the Scriptures are wrong, or they say something like God has given them a special dispensation and it is okay for them! *Foolishness!*

Make no mistake about it, God will discipline our behavior when it is wrong and if you remember what was going on in Corinth, because of their actions, some were sick, and some have died!

But what a joy it is when a sinner turns from their error and returns to the Lord!

What a powerful letter and, as we have seen, the focus is spiritual maturity, growing in the Lord and folks, that involves every aspect of a person's life.

Are you willing to place your life on the altar of sacrifice and give it to the Lord for His use, to be a sweet-smelling sacrifice to Him?

That is what He wants from us, not just part of our life but all of our life!

May our faith be real as we live what we say we believe. Remember what James has said, **“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”** James 1:22-25.

As I close tonight and we close this letter that James wrote to persecuted Jewish believers, let me leave you with this story.

We are told,

Dr. Leon Tucker, a gifted preacher and teacher, was a frequent visitor in our home when I was young. Once he told us of a woman who had been broken by a great tragedy in her life. She had been living under the crushing weight of a heavy burden for so long that praise had given way to complaint.

Finally, she cried out in bitterness of soul, *“Oh, I would to God I had never been made!”*

In response to her rebellious words a friend wisely replied, *“Why my dear child, you are not made yet; you are only being made, and you are quarrelling with God’s process.”*

- Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, 4368

How true that is!

May we continue to mature in the faith as we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

May we not complain with the process that God is using to grow us, to mature us in the faith but praise Him for His love and patience with us as we grow in Him!

It is as Paul said in I Thessalonians 5:23-24, **“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”**

Let Him have His way with you and watch and see how you will grow in Him! And remember, the Lord is coming back, and it looks like He is coming back soon!