

**The Letter of James**  
**A Study Guide**

Part III of III  
James 4 & 5

## **Week 9, Day 1: Divisions and conflicts: the source, the seriousness, and the solution. (James 4:1-10)**

At the end of chapter 3, James writes that wisdom from God is peaceable, gentle, and merciful (vs 17). The recipients of his letter might have wondered: Why, then are we having discord among our brethren? Are we not the people of God? (1:1). Do we not seek God's wisdom? (1:5). If our church leaders are appointed by God, why are we having these quarrels and conflicts among ourselves? (4:1). Is this discord part of God's testing of their faith? To this last question James would answer a resounding 'No!' God does not want discord and confusion in His church family. It is God's express will that the church body live in harmony and love (John 13:34-35; 15:12; 1 Cor 1:10).

If it is God's will that we live in harmony and love, what then is the cause of our quarrels and conflicts? James answers: "Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?" (vs 1). The source of strife in our church, and in our homes, is the same as the source of temptations: the fleshly and worldly desires within us (1:14; 4:2). James calls it greed, lust, and selfish ambition (3:16; 4:2-3). In other words, the source of our strife is the evil desires of our hearts that are not completely surrendered to the Spirit of God. James has labeled this 'double-mindedness' (1:8; 4:8).

"You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." (vs 2-4).

We may greatly desire something and get angry if we do not get it. In our minds we might get angry at someone – at this point we have already committed murder in our heart (Matt 5:21-22). We may lose our self-control and fight and quarrel with others, at work, home, or at church. It may lead to physical action by stealing that which we want. Or worse, it may lead to physical abuse and even murder. When James mentions murder, some commentators believe he is referring to the logical conclusion of anger or is using hyperbole (an overstatement) to make his point. But that may not be the case. James may actually be referring to murder being committed in the church assembly. There was a case a few years ago in California, where uncontrolled thoughts by a Christian in a leadership role actually led to murder. Personal confession and repentance followed, but so did his arrest by the police.

James says that we do not have because we do not ask. If we do ask of God and don't receive what we asked for, it is because we are asking to fulfill our pleasures (vs 3-4). Implied in James' words is the advice to go to God for *all* our requests. This is part of the solution. If we desire something and know that it is against God's will, we usually will not bring it before Him. Instead, we will try to avoid Him. But when we want something, whether we recognize it is something good or bad for us, we *must not avoid God*. Instead, we should go to Him in prayer for *everything*. If we do know it is bad for us, we can ask God for help, and He will transform our desires. If we don't know that it is bad for us, He will certainly let us know. In the next few verses, James emphasizes the holiness of God and how much He wants to help us when we are tempted. The solution

begins by going to God in prayer. We must also avail ourselves of the help of our brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as our pastors and elders.

## **Week 9, Day 2: Betrothed to a Jealous God, Part I. (James 4:4)**

James has told us that the source of our quarrels and conflicts, and general unhappiness, is our selfish pleasures (vs 1). He now tells us the seriousness of seeking those pleasures. He begins by calling his brethren adulteresses. That ought to catch our attention. Is he not being unkind? Might he be guilty of not holding his tongue and going against his own advice? Actually, no. He is warning us of the seriousness of being double-minded. The Bible says that we are like Christ's bride (fiancée, in our culture; see e.g. Isa 54:5; Jer 2:2; 31:32; Ezek 16:8 + Ruth 3:9; Hos 2:19; Eph 5:23-32), betrothed to Him for the upcoming marriage in heaven (Rev 19:7-9). Being betrothed to someone was as legally binding as actually being married. Being unfaithful to that betrothal is called adultery (e.g. Jer 3:8; Ezek 16:15, 32; Hos 1:2). James uses the picture of the betrothal to show his readers what they are really doing when they seek the pleasures of this world. It is the same as cheating on our spouse. Cheating on one's spouse is extremely cruel. James calls it hostility, or hatred. To cheat on our relationship with God is hatred towards God. We might not think of it that way, but God does! We might think of it as not being certain of our commitment. God calls it being His enemy! What God demands of His wife – that is, you and me who believe in Him – is faithfulness to that relationship. When we choose to indulge in the sinful pleasures of this world, we have cheated on Christ. God does have a great capacity to forgive, as we shall see in verses 6-10. But He also has a great capacity to be hurt, for His love for us is unimaginable:

“How can I give you up, O Ephraim?  
How can I surrender you, O Israel?  
How can I make you like Admah?  
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?  
*My heart is turned over within Me,  
All My compassions are kindled.”* (Hos 11:8; italics added)

### **Jerusalem's unfaithfulness did not go unpunished:**

“Therefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God,  
'Because your lewdness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered through your harlotries with your lovers . . . behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure . . . I will gather them against you from every direction and expose your nakedness to them that they may see all your nakedness. Thus I will judge you like women who commit adultery.

"Then I will stop you from playing the harlot . . . So I will calm My fury against you and My jealousy will depart from you, and I will be pacified and angry no more.

'Because you have not remembered the days of your youth but have enraged Me by all these things, behold, I in turn will bring your conduct down on your own

head,' declares the Lord God, 'so that you will not commit this lewdness on top of all your other abominations.'" (Ezek 16:35-43, selected verses)

**Betraying the Lord with their sinful conduct incurred God's anger. The warning in the New Testament is not any lighter:**

"For we know Him who said,  
'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.'  
"And again,  
'The Lord will judge His people.'  
"It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."  
(Heb 10:30-31)

C.S. Lewis was the author who wrote the classic children's series: *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In those stories, Christ is portrayed as the lion named Aslan. One of the important themes of those stories was the oft-repeated line, "Aslan is not a tame lion." In other words, God is not man. He is God Almighty. We do not tell Him what to do, or what is right or wrong, or what is acceptable or not. He is God. He is Righteous. He is Awesome in power. And He is now our Husband and, in another analogy, He is also our Father (Heb 12:5). As children of God, if we sin and persist in that sin, He will discipline us to bring us back:

"and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,

'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
Nor faint when you are reproved by Him;  
For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,  
And He scourges every son whom He receives.'

"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." (Heb 12:5-6, 11).

### **Week 9, Day 3: Betrothed to a Jealous God, Part II. (James 4:5)**

According to Blue (BKC, 1983), verse 5 "is one of the most difficult verses to translate in the entire letter." This would explain its diverse renderings:

"Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?" (NIV)

"Do you think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" (KJV)

"Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?'" (NKJV)

“Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?'” (NASB)

As you would guess, commentators are not in agreement as to what this verse means. One view is to take the word *spirit* to mean man's spirit, and not the Holy Spirit. Coupled with this view is the thought that the word translated *intensely* (NIV), or *lusteth* (KJV), describes the action of the human spirit's natural tendency to envy. It is also pointed out that the Greek word *phthónos*, translated *envy* (NIV, KJV), or *jealously* (NKJV, NASB), is always used with an evil meaning in other passages of the New Testament. Thus, in the NIV and old KJV, the heart of man is prone to evil. This is certainly true, as “the heart of man is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9). The flow of verses 4-6 would then be: friendship with the world is enmity against God, and your heart tends to toward intense envy, but God gives a greater grace – if we humble ourselves, he will give us grace to deal with our envy of the world. This viewpoint, however, does not take into account the framework of the marriage between God and the believer. The adulterous nature of the wayward believer is not contrasted with the jealous love that God has for His people and His holiness.

The other major view is that the word *Spirit* in verse 5 refers to the Holy Spirit. Coupled with this view is the fact that the word *yearns* or *desires* can be taken in both a negative or positive sense. A man who desires other women has committed sin, but a man who desires his own wife is fulfilling a commandment in Scripture (Prov 5:19). Also with this viewpoint, is the thought that the Greek word *phthónos* should be taken in a non-evil way to refer to God's *jealous* nature for His holiness and for His people. As pointed out by Moo (1985), the word is used this way in the Apocrypha and other non-Biblical Greek texts. The flow of verses 4-6 would then take into account the framework of the marriage between God and the believer: friendship with the world is enmity against God, for one is then being unfaithful to Him. God jealously desires a faithful 'bride'. He loves us so much, He 'envies' the place we hold in our hearts for the world. But though we may be unfaithful, His intense love for us yearns for us to return to Him. Therefore, He gives a greater grace – if we humble ourselves, He will allow us to return to Him.

When Scripture refers to God as a jealous God, it has two things in mind: His holiness and His love for us. Joshua 24:19 describes God as a holy God, a jealous God. God does not want His people to worship anyone or anything except Him:

“You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.” (Deut 5:7-9)

Not only does God not want to share the worship due Him with anyone else, no one else can handle it. Anyone who is idolized, and receives that idolization, becomes arrogant. Only the Uncreated Being can handle it.

The second reason He is a jealous God is because He loves us so much. If we follow after anyone else, it will be to our own harm:

“Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a *snare* in your midst. But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim — for you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God — otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods.” (Ex 34:12-16).

To follow anyone or anything other than God will be a snare to us; it will draw us away from God. That is the enemy's whole purpose in tempting us to sin – to draw us away from God. In the Garden of Eden, the purpose of Satan was to draw Adam and Eve away from God – to cause a separation. Recall that James warned us that temptations in conjunction with our evil desires draw us away and lead to sin and death (James 1:14-15). This is what James is exhorting his readers to be aware of: love of this world leads to separation from God. He tells us that God jealously guards the marriage relationship He has with us – a relationship that could only be made possible through the death of His Son Jesus Christ. God is very committed to this relationship. Let us decide to be committed to this relationship too.

#### **Week 9, Day 4: The Guest. (James 4:5)**

##### *A violin, a violinist, and a spiritual truth*

If you ever get the chance to hear violinist Joshua Bell perform, do not pass it up. The performance is worth much more than the price of the ticket. His skills are the result of over 25 years of serious study and practice. He is arguably one of the best violinists that has ever lived. In addition to his skills, you will also hear one the best violins ever made: the Gibson Stradivarius. Made in 1713 by Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737), this violin is considered one of his finest. Named after a previous owner, Alfred Gibson, a British violinist, the violin made its long and colorful journey – once stolen and hidden from public knowledge for 51 years – into the hands of Norbet Brainin, another British violinist. He sold the Gibson Stradivarius to Joshua Bell in 2001 for \$4 million. But if you ever get to hear the sound that comes from that violin in the hands of a master violinist, you will understand why it cost so much. Its sound can fill a concert hall with a purity and depth that cannot be described by words.

One of the interesting aspects of its colorful history was during the time it was hidden from public knowledge. It was stolen in 1936 by a young man who had some skill as a violinist. In 1983, the violin needed repair – its bridge needed replacement and it had a slight opening on the side seam. The man brought the violin to a luthier – a repairer of bowed stringed instruments. It took the skillful luthier, Mr. Ed Wicks, three days to repair the violin. He immediately recognized the violin as a Stradivarius. Mr. Wicks apparently did not suspect that the violin was stolen, and returned it to the customer upon his return. The thief (and violinist) immediately tried it out. He exclaimed that the violin had never sounded so beautiful before.

This Gibson Stradivarius violin was made by a master craftsman. In the hands of a master violinist, it sounds more than amazing. What if you had the opportunity to host a violinist like Joshua Bell at your house, and he promised to play his Stradivarius violin? Do you think you would say 'yes'? Regardless of your personal preference for music, you would be unwise to say 'no'. The skill of the master violinist and the skill of the master craftsman who made the famed violin, are testimonies to the amazing skill of the human spirit. But what if someone greater than a master violinist came to your house, someone who was skilled in playing instruments of all varieties. Would you let him in? And, once in, would you offer him a cheap instrument to play – an instrument that was soiled and in need of much repair? Would it not be insulting? Would you not be embarrassed?

As you know, someone has come to visit each of our *houses*. But this someone has even greater skill than all the master musicians that ever played and of all the craftsmen that ever made musical instruments – he is the master craftsman of *all* that has been made. He is the Creator of the Universe. Man was meant to be His finest creation, His finest instrument, of all created beings on earth. Are we comfortable offering to Him lives that are soiled, worn, and in need of much repair? Are we comfortable allowing Him into our home when He has already repaired us, and yet we seek after activities that soil and undo the repair work He has already accomplished? We are instruments created to do good works, as planned from the beginning of time (Eph 2:10). Our hearts were 'stolen' in a garden many years ago. And our lives were soiled and useless – seemingly for all eternity. But we were purchased back from the thief, the devil. We were redeemed by the blood of the Master Craftsman's Son. We came out from hiding and we began to reflect the glory of our Redeemer – a sweet fragrance, a beautiful melody. As time has passed, what now has become of our life? Have we strayed from the path we started on? Do we no longer listen to the Spirit that was placed in us when we were made alive in Him? Do we grieve the Guest that resides in us by our desires for the refuse of this world in exchange for the eternal gifts He has to offer? Are we so ashamed of what we have become that we don't believe that the damage we have done can be repaired again?

James 4:6 comes to our rescue: "But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud, *but gives grace to the humble.*'" That is our opportunity! Let us not pass this performance by! The Great Musician and Master Craftsman await our request. He wants to repair us again. Let's give Him full control of our lives. Can we imagine what a specially designed and lovingly repaired instrument in the hands of a Master violinist would sound like? Let us humble ourselves and listen!

[Much information came from [www.joshuabell.com](http://www.joshuabell.com) and the World Book Encyclopedia.]

### **Week 9, Day 5: The proud, the humble, and God's desire to forgive. (James 4:6)**

Though our lives in recent years may not have reflected the sweet melody of our Lord, His grace is ever there to welcome the prodigals back. James quotes from Proverbs 3:34, the Septuagint version: "The Lord resists the proud; but He gives grace to

the humble” (translation by Brenton, 1992). This is very similar to what Paul wrote to the Romans: “but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rom 5:20). God, like the Father of the prodigal son, waits . . . looking for his wayward ones to come to their senses and return to Him (Luke 15:20). A repentant heart will always find open arms from the Father. But it takes a repentant heart, one who will humble himself.

It is interesting that Solomon, the one who wrote Proverbs 3:34, in his elder years became proud. Solomon was probably the wisest mere human to walk this earth. In his early years, he prayed to God, asking Him to be merciful to the people of Israel. Though Solomon acknowledged that they would sin, he prayed that if they remembered their Lord and “returned to You with all their heart . . . then hear from heaven . . . their prayer and supplications, and . . . forgive Your people who have sinned against You” (2 Chron 6:36-39). Solomon knew the compassionate and forgiving heart of God. God answered Solomon and said that if “My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron 7:14).

Solomon probably learned of God's mercy from his father King David. David, whose heart generally was single-minded toward God, stumbled greatly. He desired another man's wife (Bathsheba), committed adultery, and then had the wife's husband killed (2 Samuel 11). He kept silent about his sin, but God sought out his repentance (Ps 32:3-4). Nathan, the prophet was eventually sent to David, and David acknowledged his sin, repented, and was restored to a relationship with God (2 Samuel 12:1-13; Ps 32:5). Solomon was the second child of Bathsheba. He undoubtedly knew of the amazing grace of God. Not only was an adulterous relationship forgiven, but one of the offspring of that forgiven relationship became King of Israel. And yet, even though David was an example of humbling oneself before God and receiving His abundant grace, Solomon was snared by wealth and disobedience to God's commandments by going after many women. God's intense love for us tries to prevent this. His jealousy for our worship of Him is for our good:

“the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God – otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods.” (Exod 34: 14-16)

**Solomon, though wisest among men, was snared by his own lusts and disobedience to God:**

“Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, 'You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods' [Deut 7:3; 17:17]. Solomon held fast to these in love. He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the

heart of David his father had been. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord fully, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.” (1 Kings 11:1-8)

God pursued Solomon, speaking to Him in His anger (1 Kings 11:9-11), trying to get Solomon's attention. But the Bible does not record that Solomon humbled himself and repented of his sins.

What can we learn from this? James is quite clear. Friendship with the world separates us from God. James calls it spiritual adultery (James 4:4). The temptations from the world, Satan, and our own lusts draw us away from Him. James has warned us already of the dangers of temptations (James 1:13-16). He warns us again of the severe danger of flirting with the world (vs 4). He reminds us that we are the temple of God's Holy Spirit (vs 5; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16). James also reminds us that God jealously desires a relationship with us (vs 5). Even though we may have strayed from Him, all we have to do is turn from this world, humble ourselves, and He will give grace that is greater than our sins (vs 6). True wisdom fears the temptations of this world and seeks, by God's grace, to be single-minded toward Him. This is his message in verses 7-10.

### **Week 10, Day 1: The cure for double-mindedness. (James 4:7-10)**

James has been teaching us that the weakness of our flesh to the allurements of this world and the temptations that come from Satan result in us being drawn away from God (James 1:13-16; 4:4). It is also the cause of disharmony among the brethren and within ourselves (James 4:1). James now exhorts us to avoid this by a two-fold response.

“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (vs 7)

Let us not be drawn in by the snares of this world. Let us lay aside the sins that so easily entangle us (Heb 12:1) and let us set before us the goal of living for Christ. Let us not believe the lies of Satan, but let us declare him to be a liar and refuse to obey him. Who really wants to be obedient to the devil? Who really wants to be under his lordship; to be a son of his disobedience? (Rom 6:16; Eph 2:2). We were freed from that by God's free gift of salvation (Rom 6:5-7).

“For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.” (Rom 6:5-7)

But how does being free from sin become a reality in our daily lives? As simple as it may sound, it comes down to our choice. God has done everything to reverse the

fall of Adam and Eve that made us slaves to sin. He paid the penalty for our sins, He removed the guilt that came with it, and He has given us His Holy Spirit to provide the strength to carry out our decisions. He has 'leveled the playing field.' We now have the ability to choose between right and wrong. It is *our* decision. It is *His* strength to carry out that decision, but it is *our choice*.

So how do we resist the devil as James tells us to? First, "draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (vs 8). James reminded us of the availability of God's grace in verse 6. Let us not forget what the writer of Hebrews wrote:

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb 4:14-16)

Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Christ is fully aware of our temptations and the strength required to combat them. That is one reason He sent the Helper – the Holy Spirit, to help us keep God's commandments (John 14:15).

The second thing that James tells us to do is to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts (vs 8; Ps 24:3-4). If we have been double-minded, which are those he is addressing at the end of vs 8, then our repentance will require a change in our behavior and heart attitude. The sins of this world are no longer to be desired or even considered as an option for us. We are not to dwell upon the temptations that come to our minds. We need to enact a 'zero-tolerance' policy in our lives. Continual yielding to temptations results in death (Rom 6:16; Gal 6:7; James 1:15). Knowing this fact is a powerful incentive to help us in our choices. And how do we purify our hearts? It is God's doing (Ps 51:10); but we must surrender to His work in our hearts (Rom 12:1-2).

The third point James makes in this passage is how this process starts: "Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom" (vs 9). Again, this exhortation is not for those who are single-minded in their pursuit of God. The people he is addressing are the double-minded who desire their own pleasures rather than being completely devoted to God (vs 1-3). They have not comprehended the seriousness of sin. Repentance comes when we are truly sorry for our sins. James has been pointing out that friendship with the world is hostility against God. He calls the double-minded 'adulteresses.' He is trying to get our attention. Continual sin leads to death. If we are still dull of hearing and dull of feeling, ask the Lord to help; even in this we need mercy. He will convict us. But His conviction leads to repentance. It is for our good. Let us not be hard-hearted (Heb 3:7-13). Seek God's help:

"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." (vs 10)

Here are some examples of God's restoring powers:

"When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away

Through my groaning all day long.  
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.  
I acknowledged my sin to You,  
And my iniquity I did not hide;  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord";  
And You forgave the guilt of my sin.  
Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found;  
Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.  
You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble;  
You surround me with songs of deliverance." (Ps 32:3-7)

"Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;  
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity  
And cleanse me from my sin.  
For I know my transgressions,  
And my sin is ever before me.  
Against You, You only, I have sinned  
And done what is evil in Your sight,  
So that You are justified when You speak  
And blameless when You judge.  
Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
And in sin my mother conceived me.  
Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,  
And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.  
Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
Make me to hear joy and gladness,  
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.  
Hide Your face from my sins  
And blot out all my iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from Your presence  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation  
And sustain me with a willing spirit.  
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,  
And sinners will be converted to You." (Ps 51:1-13)

**Week 10, Day 2: Resisting the devil. (An aside: Eph 6:11-18; 1 Pet 5:5-11)**

Those whose hearts are single-minded toward God also struggle with temptations. In fact, they struggle more. Those who give into temptations are not really putting up a struggle, are they? But they need to. The Apostle Paul and the Apostle

Peter also exhorts us to resist the devil.

They both begin their exhortations with warnings of the seriousness of the battle that we are in:

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Eph 6:10-12)

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him.” (1 Pet 5:8-9)

These are not scare tactics. They are the truth. The devil hates us because we love the Lord. If we were friends with the world, the world would then love us (John 15:18-19).

Paul says that in order to resist the devil, we need all that God has provided for us through His Son and the Holy Spirit. Here is the armor He has given us (Eph 6:14-18):

- Truth – truth of sin and righteousness. Knowing the truth, sets us free (John 8:31-36). The lies of the devil are to keep us captive. Jesus frees us from the devil's lies and from sin and judgment. His truth girds our loins (NASB) or waist (NIV). The midsection of our bodies contain the core muscles that enable us to stand. It is always easier to fight for what you know to be true than for some theory or ideal. Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). He is the foundation of our armor.
- Righteousness – the “breastplate of righteousness” of God protects our hearts. Our standing before God is based on Christ's righteousness. That knowledge will prevent any disheartening 'news' that can be thrown at us by the devil. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us and, through the sanctifying process of enduring the trials we face, it begins to become part of our character. Those with clean hands and a pure heart will recognize the evil that is contained in temptations, and will avoid going after them.
- The Gospel of peace – the good news of our salvation gives us peace with God. This provides sure-footing when the onslaught of the devil comes. Having peace with God provides more strength than anything that can befall us. It is a peace that is beyond understanding (Phil 4:7) – it is supernatural. This will truly help us “stand firm” (Eph 6:11, 13, 14).
- Faith – the shield protected the ancient warrior from flaming darts. The shields were covered with linen and leather in a way that apparently helped extinguish the flaming arrows from the enemy. Faith in God consists, among other things, of hope and endurance. And hope in Jesus, who has already entered into the presence of God, is the anchor of our souls (Heb 6:19-20). There are times when the battle against Satan is raging with such fierceness, that very little makes sense. All we can do is hope and endure. Like a soldier's

shield, we must cling to our beliefs in God in these times, knowing that “hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom 5:5). The Holy Spirit teaches us and reminds us that God loves us. In reality, what else could be more important. If God loves us, who can triumph over us? No one (Rom 8:31). Faith in God's love quenches all the darts of Satan.

- Salvation – the helmet of a soldier, of course, protected his head. The head is our control center. All the actions of our body are in subjection to our minds. The salvation given to us through Christ changes us completely. Our world view is completely opposite of what it used to be. Being saved changes the direction our march. We must never lose sight of who we are living for. The world is passing away and we are no longer part of that world. In the midst of temptations, we must remember that all of the glory of this world will pass away (James 1:10-11). In this light, temptations do not have the same glitter.
- Sword – the Word of God was inspired by the Holy Spirit. The sword is not only a piece of armor that deflects a blow by an enemy's sword, but it is used as an offensive weapon as well. Christ used the Word to defend Himself and defeat Satan when He was tempted (Matt 4:1-11). Knowing the truths contained in the Bible can deflect Satan's lies and strike at the heart of the devil and his forces. Satan flees from the truth. He is defenseless against it.
- Prayer – prayer is not identified with any piece of the soldier's armor, but it is a mighty resource for us. Prayer is how we talk and listen to God. Communicating with God is needed at all times, whether we are being tempted or not. Talking with God is such a privilege. You and I can talk to the Creator of the Universe. And . . . He wants to hear from us! Is that not hard to grasp? Talk about amazing grace. Grace in times of need or in times of peace. What a friend we have in Jesus.

With this armor of God, Paul exhorts his readers to “stand firm” (Eph 6:11, 13, 14). Temptations and trials are guaranteed to come our way (Matt 18:7; Luke 17:1; John 16:33). Therefore Paul and Peter exhort us to be ready for them. They're coming; stand firm. And always remember, God is there to help us. He gives grace to the humble.

James began this section by addressing the congregations of the churches with regard to their quarrels and conflicts (James 4:1). The source of their troubles was their seeking after their own pleasures and selfish gain. One who only seeks to fulfill his own 'needs,' cannot see the real needs of others. James' advice was to humble themselves and repent of their sins, for God gives grace to the humble, but is opposed to the proud. Peter also quotes from Proverbs 3:34 in his first epistle, where he also encourages church harmony. He exhorts the elders not to lord it over those they shepherd. He tells those being led to subject themselves to their elders, and “all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet 5:5). Church harmony comes when all of us are humble toward each other. And we are only humble to others when we humble ourselves before God. Like the rich man addressed in James 1:10, we are all to glory in our humiliation – that is, our knowledge that there are no superior people among us.

According to God, there is no distinction between rich or poor, one class versus another; all are equal before God. Likewise, as James encouraged the poor man addressed in James 1:9, there are no little people. Those who are saved are all elevated to a high position with Christ; all are “seated with Christ in the heavenly places” (Eph 2:6). This being so, we are to treat each other with respect and dignity and with all humility, since none of us are better than anyone else. This will end slander, backbiting, and the judging of others, both in our assemblies and in all other areas of life. James addresses this next in verses 11-12.

[References for Ephesians 6: H.W. Hoehner, 1983. The Bible Knowledge Commentary. Victor Books, USA, Canada, England. and A.S. Wood. 1981. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.]

### **Week 10, Day 3: The characteristics of humility, Part I. How we view ourselves compared to others. (James 4:11-12)**

Because we are human and have a hard time controlling our tongues, James addresses this in the context of church harmony and humility before God. This is a real problem not only in the context of our churches, but at home and at our workplaces as well. Verses 11-12 flow from what he has been saying about humbling ourselves before God. James has exhorted us to submit ourselves to God. This includes obedience to His commandments. One of those commandments is “to love your neighbor as yourself” – what James previously termed the royal law (James 2:8). As we have seen, this commandment comes from Leviticus 19:18, which, with Deuteronomy 6:5, is the essence of all the Law and the Prophets (Matt 22:37-40). Therefore, if we speak evil of our brother in the Lord, or anyone else for that matter, we “speak against the law” (vs 11). That is, we have violated the commandment to love them. In addition, we “judge the law” – that is, we are judging for ourselves whether we wish to abide by the commandment or not. We become “not a doer of the law, but a judge of it” (vs 11).

Do we realize how arrogant this is? One who sits as a judge in a case, takes the evidence presented to him and decides if the accused has violated a certain law or has abided by it. If the accused is guilty, he then metes out a sentence according to the seriousness of the crime. James is saying that when we speak evil of our brother, we are acting like a judge. We have decided that the person we have spoken against is not worthy to be loved as the royal law commands. Look what we have done:

- We have judged the recipient of our evil speech as someone lower than ourselves,
- We have disobeyed the commandment of God to love our brother and neighbor,
- We have placed ourselves above the law, deciding whether we wish to obey it or not, and worst of all,
- We have assumed the position of God, who alone is the Lawgiver and Judge (vs 12).

This last point is especially strong. God is the Lawgiver. We have no right to judge the law (vs 11), that is, to decide whether the law He created is acceptable to us or not. How can we even think of elevating ourselves to the position of God? Are we able to enforce any law of God? Do we have the ability to save a soul or destroy it? Of course not. Only God is the Lawgiver. Only God can enforce His law – He is the one who saves or destroys souls (Matt 10:28). God has declared that all people are equal before Him (Gal 3:28). But in our relationship with others, the proper attitude is to be their servant (Matt 10:25-28). The Bible commands that we esteem others as more important than ourselves.

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.” (Phil 2:3)

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.” (Rom 12:10)

Rather than criticizing our brothers, we need to help each other, realizing in humility, that we are no different (Gal 6:1-2).

“And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” (Heb 10:24-25)

### **Week 10, Day 4: The characteristics of humility, Part II. Who is in control of our lives? (James 4:13-17)**

James now addresses the issue of how we view ourselves in relation to God. Is He our Master? Do we include Him in every aspect of our lives? Is He Lord of our business dealings? Or do we boast in our business savvy and self-reliance? We sometimes compartmentalize our lives, especially in business. It's as if the business is some personal area of our lives that is off limits to others, even God.

James calls attention to those who are steeped in the business world:

“Come now,” or “Now listen” (NIV), “you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.” (vs 13-14)

Those who make definite plans without regard to the sovereignty of God are not, as James refers to himself, bond-servants of God (James 1:1). A bond-servant is at the disposal of his master. The writers of the New Testament letters, Paul, James, Peter, Jude and John, all referred to themselves as bond-servants of God. Jesus calls us to be His servants (John 12:26). Those who refuse to be His servant – claiming themselves to be above a subservient role – will nonetheless serve something else. In many cases, it will be the accumulation of money (Luke 16:13) or to be master of their own soul. But James confronts these people and says:

'You are just a vapor . . . that vanishes away!' (vs 14)

Life is so fleeting. James already spoke of this to the wealthy (James 1:10-11). He now speaks to those who have given their lives over to the pursuit of business dealings without any regard to what God wants to do with their lives. They plan their lives and activities for the coming year as if they had control over the future. James replies: 'You don't know what will happen to you tomorrow!' We have no guarantee that we will live even one more day. A sudden accident, or an unexpected health issue, can stun us with the reality of our mortality in a second. The proper attitude is submission to God:

“Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’” (vs 15)

This is the humility that James has been speaking of: “Submit therefore to God . . . Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord” (vs 7, 10). A single-minded disciple of God is just that: *single-minded on God's will* and *a follower of God*. Confidence and self-reliance in oneself, when one cannot even control what will happen tomorrow, is boastful and arrogant (vs 16); it is also foolish (Ps 92:6-7).

Proverbs speak of the difference between the proud and the humble:

“Pride goes before destruction,  
and a haughty spirit before stumbling.  
It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly  
than to divide the spoil with the proud.  
He who gives attention to the Word will find good,  
and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord.” (Prov 16:18, 20)

We have been warned to walk humbly before God. Not to do this is sin (vs 17). There is no other option. If we refuse to change course when we are on a wayward path, it leads to a loss of reward, and possibly judgment. This is James' next topic.

### **Week 10, Day 5: The improper use of earthly wealth, Part I. (5:1-6)**

James introduced his warning to the self-reliant businessman with a call to listen: “Come now” (NASB) or “Now listen” (NIV). He makes this same call to those who are wealthy (vs 1). Most commentators view this warning to be to non-believers. This is probably due to James' warning of their impending judgment in verse 1, and their cruel conduct described in verses 4-6. But to say that a Christian's conduct is never cruel is unfortunately wrong. We know the evil in our own hearts. Even though we are saved, we wrestle against our flesh (Rom 7:18, 23; Gal 5:17). Years ago a pastor, who had a radio program, would often say to his congregation: “If you knew what was in the heart of the person sitting next to you, you would get up and find another seat!” Our hearts are desperately wicked (Jer 17:9).

But thanks to God, we have the Holy Spirit living inside us. If we yield to Him, we

shall have victory. But we must yield. That is James' point. He is addressing those who are double-minded, those who are not completely yielded to God. If we “walk by the Spirit . . . we will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Gal 5:16). But, if we continue on our wayward path, “misery” will come upon us (vs 1). Misery speaks of hardship and distress. With reference to the Lord's coming in verses 7-8, it could also refer to impending judgment on the unsaved. The word is broad enough to be all inclusive. Blue (BKC, 1983) believes that in verses 1-6, James is addressing “all rich people, both believers and unbelievers.”

James exhorts the rich to weep and howl (vs 1). This is similar to his exhortation in chapter 4, verse 9 where he tells those who have drifted from the Lord and have become friends of the world to “be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.” In other words, we are to be truly sorry and repentant of our sins. James will confront those sins head-on in verses 4-6. But before he does, he tries to reason with the wealthy about their foolish goal: the accumulation of wealth that is temporary.

“Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!” (vs 2-3)

When James wrote his epistle, the small acreages of many family farms were being *absorbed* into large estates by a few wealthy landowners (Moo, 1985). The term 'your riches have rotted' probably refers to the loss of their crops due to the grains' inability to be stored for as long as the quantity stored demanded. They had so much that they couldn't consume it fast enough to avoid spoilage. Their clothing also was temporary; it had become moth-eaten. They had so much clothing that they didn't notice that the clothes they weren't wearing had become infested with moths. Not only were they accumulating much more than they needed, but what they had accumulated was wasting away from nonuse.

James then says that their gold and silver had rusted. Whereas silver can tarnish, high grade gold is not generally known to rust. But according to the website of the World Gold Council, some 22-carat gold jewelry in India showed a true tarnish layer. This tarnishing was unexpected and theories were listed as to how this could happen. The theories included the gold coming in contact with high sulfur compounds found in food, spices, and sulfur-containing storage environments. This last possibility draws attention to a passage from the Apocrypha, which was an addendum to the first-century Bibles (i.e. Septuagint). In the 'Wisdom of the Son of Sirach,' or 'Ecclesiasticus,' it says:

“Nevertheless, be understanding with those who are poor. Don't keep them waiting for your generosity. The Lord has commanded us to help the poor; don't refuse the help they need. It is better to lose your money by helping a relative or friend than to lose it by letting it rust away under a rock somewhere. Use your wealth as the Most High has commanded; this will do you more good than keeping your money for yourself. Count among your treasures the fact that you give to the poor. It will save you from all kinds of trouble.” (Sirach 29:8-12; Good News Bible translation)

We do not accept this as Scripture, but we can accept it as good advice. The references to the gold rusting while being stored under a rock, instead of being used to help others, might have been a part of James' thinking. The Lord does command us to help the poor (e.g. Lev 19:9-10; Deut 15:7-8, 11; Matt 6:3; 19:21), and not doing so is a cause for judgment (Ezek 16:49).

What is particularly interesting in James 5, verses 2-3, is the verb tense that James used. According to Moo (1985), their riches, clothing, and gold had rotted, had been moth-eaten, and had rusted. It occurred in the past and was now physically demonstrating to them the foolishness of their investments; it was a temporary investment that they had already lost. Even the unsaved rich see this. All their time and effort in accumulating their wealth has either wasted away or will be unavailable for their use in the near future. And, of course, none of us can take this type of wealth into the next life, be that heaven or hell. What James is implying is: why are you doing this? Why are you wasting your time and effort in the accumulation of things that do not last?

In addition, James warns the wealthy that the 'rust' (NASB) or 'corrosion' (NIV) of their wealth, due to its nonuse, will be a witness against them (vs 3). They should have used their wealth to help the poor. Those who have been given the gift of giving (Rom 12:8), those who have money, are to do so with generosity. The rust, or nonuse of their wealth, will burn when God rewards or destroys the results of how we lived:

“ . . . each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” (1 Cor 3:13-15)

To be saved is the result of God's amazing grace and love through His Son Jesus Christ. This is indeed wonderful. But what will it feel like, what will we experience, if our entire life's work is judged by God to only be worthy of being consumed by fire? Our salvation is indeed wonderful, but to see the result of our entire time on earth accumulate nothing in heaven . . . does that not cause us to reconsider how we invest our time and effort in this world?

James ends verse 3, paraphrased here, with a strong statement to Christians: 'You are hoarding this wealth in the midst of what you know to be the last days!' Peter declared the time from Christ's ascension and the giving of the Holy Spirit to the time of the great tribulation to be the last days (Acts 2:16-17, 20). Peter also wrote that all that is on the earth shall be destroyed. Since this is so, "what sort of person ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of the Lord?" (2 Pet 3:10-12). In the last sentence of verse 3, James is in effect saying: 'Wake up! Are you so blind as to the times that you accumulate earthly wealth just before the return of our Lord?'

Jesus tells us that His Father will take care of our material needs. We need to invest in His work and to be faithful servants, ready for His return (Luke 12:29-37).

## **Week 11, Day 1: The improper use of earthly wealth, Part II. (5:4-6)**

In verses 4-6, James continues to warn the wealthy of the danger of their pride and foolishness by confronting them with the sins of which they were guilty: hoarding their money (vs 4), fraudulent business practices (vs 4), and luxurious living (vs 5) while the poor are neglected and despised (vs 6).

In verse 4, James declares that the rich have hoarded the money that was due the laborers who harvested their fields. These laborers were the very means by which the wealthy got rich, and yet they most likely did not pay them a good wage. In addition, they delayed the payment of their wages, something the poor laborers could not afford. The commandment against this is quite clear:

“You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns. You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the Lord and it become sin in you.” (Deut 24:14-15)

James says in verse 4, that the actual pay that the rich have withheld from the workers, cries out against the rich man. The money that should have been in the hands of the workers was still in the possession of the rich man. The word means to scream or shout. According to Zodhiates (1992), the word is an onomatopoeia, which means it imitates the sound, such as our English words: *buzz* or *murmur*. The sound the Greek word conveys is that of “the hoarse cry of a raven” (Zodhiates, 1992). It is an irritating sound. The conscience of the employer cannot easily disregard what he has done. And yet, he does. He knows the right thing to do, but he does not do it (James 4:17). He is a deliberate forgetful hearer of the Word (James 1:24). An unbelieving employer may not have known about the commandment to pay a poor laborer before the sun sets; if he did, it is unlikely he cared. But the Christian, even though he has made friends with the world (James 4:4), does. Yet, he persists in his disobedience. He fights against his conscience. But he will not go unpunished.

In addition, James says that the worker himself cries out to the Lord of Hosts. The phrase *Lord of Hosts* (Sabaoth, NASB) means “the almighty, powerful leader of a great army” (Moo, 1985). It is God Almighty that hears the cry of the oppressed. At this point, it would be appropriate to say, 'uh-oh,' or something worse. For when the Lord is on one man's side, you do not want to be on the other side! In the phrase the *cries of the harvesters* (NIV), James uses a different word for cry than he used for the pay that cries out against the employer. In this 'cry' he uses a word that is also onomatopoeic (Vine, 1940), a sound that signified a call for help. It is the same word used in the Greek version of the Old Testament (Septuagint) in Exodus 2:23, during Israel's long years of slavery in Egypt:

“and the children of Israel groaned because of their tasks, and cried, and their cry because of their tasks went up to God. And God heard their groanings.” (Ex 2:23-24, Brenton, 1992)

It is probable that James picked this word (it is the only time used in the New

Testament) to associate the unfair practices of the large estate owners of his time with the cruel Egyptian taskmasters over the Israelites during their time of slavery. But the Israelites did not leave Egypt unpaid for their work. God intervened. When God delivered them from their slavery in Egypt, He instructed the women to ask from the Egyptians articles of silver and gold (Ex 3:31-21). And God gave them favor in the Egyptians sight and they granted their request. “Thus they plundered the Egyptians” (Ex 12:35-36; cp. Ezek 29:19 for an example of plunder being wages). Their wages were paid in full, and probably with interest! As for the audience of James' letter, God will intervene again at His second coming (James 5:7-8). And He will set everything right. Who would you prefer to be at His judgment seat? The proud landowners that defrauded the laborers, or the laborers?

In verse 5, James continues his indictment of the large estate owners. Rather than use their wealth to help others, they lived a lifestyle of luxury and unbridled pleasure. This was the reason God judged Sodom:

“Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it.” (Ezek 16:49-50)

Unless the arrogant rich repent, God will remove them as well. And how hard it is for the rich to repent (Mark 10:23-25). That is why James has been exhorting his congregations to repent of their sins, submit to God, and resist the devil (James 4:7-10). That is also why James has been warning the rich of impending misery and a fruitless life (vs 1-3), as well as describing in detail their sins which they cannot deny (vs 4-6). As in James 4:9, his goal is their repentance (James 5:1).

## **Week 11, Day 2: The improper use of earthly wealth, Part III. (5:5-6)**

The description James uses of their luxurious lifestyle and self-indulgence is quite revealing. The literal translation of verse 5, according to Marshall (1986) is:

“Ye lived daintily on the earth and lived riotously, ye nourished the hearts of you in a day of slaughter.”

The word daintily describes well their state: they lived “a soft life” (BKC, 1983). All the comforts money could buy, they bought. The hard labor of the harvesters working for less than fair wages, enabled them to live without laboring themselves. They liked being pampered. They also didn't like any restraints; they lived riotously. Whatever they wanted for themselves, they had. Whatever they wanted to do, they did. Nothing would stop their self-seeking quest for pleasure.

They fattened their hearts in a day of slaughter. This phrase has been interpreted differently by commentators. Some say that the rich were unknowingly fattening themselves up, like cattle, for the day of slaughter – the great day of judgment. All their sins were making them fat, ready to be destroyed. And they weren't even aware of the

coming judgment.

Others believe the phrase continues to describe their self-indulgence. Their hearts were not fattened *for the* day of slaughter, but *in a* day of slaughter. They were living luxurious, soft lives. They pursued and obtained anything their hearts desired. They fattened their hearts at the expense of the poor – a day of slaughter for those who could not defend themselves. This view flows well with verse 6. They have condemned and murdered the righteous man, he does not resist. The word condemn “is a judicial term, and suggests . . . that the rich are using, and perhaps perverting, the legal processes available to them to accumulate property and gain wealth” (Moo, 1985). They are like those who scheme evil:

“Woe to those who scheme iniquity,  
Who work out evil on their beds!  
When morning comes, they do it,  
For it is in the power of their hands.  
They covet fields and then seize them,  
And houses, and take them away.  
They rob a man and his house,  
A man and his inheritance.” (Micah 2:1-2)

But the Lord promises to avenge those who oppress the righteous (Micah 2:3). Revenge belongs to the Lord (Rom 12:19). Only He knows what is in the heart of the evil and only He knows how to properly deal with them (James 4:12; 5:9). The righteous know this and practice restraint (Matt 5:39; 1 Cor 6:6-7). As James writes to those who are faithful (vs 7), be patient, the Lord will return and correct every wrong.

The progression of waywardness that James has described is sad, but accurate. Those that have difficulty humbling themselves before God, but instead seek the wealth of this world, first live their lives without acknowledging the sovereignty of God in their business pursuits (James 4:13-16). In time, the deceitfulness of riches consumes their hearts. At some point, they may even take their own brethren to court (1 Cor 6:5-8). Whether one progresses to the point described by James in verses 1-6 is disputed by some commentators. But if James is referring to wealthy Christians, their conduct has become no different than that of the non-believing wealthy. That is one of the points of James' message. They knew of the material needs of the poor, but they offered only words to help them, even though they could afford to substantively help them (James 2:15-16). As James said, “What use is that? Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being by itself” (2:16-17). And here in James 5:6, they not only refuse to help the poor, but use their wealth in courts to strip the poor of what little land and money they have. In the context of the laws of the land, they may have had a legal right to do what they did, but they did not have a moral right.

Do James' words seem harsh or unfair against some of the rich brethren? Can those who claim to be believers really wander to the extent that they act this way toward those who are walking closely with the Lord? If one does not learn from the trials that God allows in our lives (2:2-4, 12), if one does not seek the wisdom that comes from God (1:5-11), but instead prefers to seek the riches of this world (1:14-15; 2:1-3; 4:1-4), what will become of him? If one does not humble himself before God

(4:7-10), but instead resists the maturing process of the Lord, what is their end? It may be that the person was never truly saved. Only God knows. It is not for us to decide. But we do know, that the people described in chapters 4 and 5 need humility and repentance before God. If we are seeking friendship with the world, we are in serious need of repentance and God's grace. James seeks to save the ones who are straying from God. And he invites us to join him (James 5:19-20).

God can and does use wealthy Christians to do excellent work. He has gifted them for necessary work. It is not the wealth that James has warned against, it is the misuse of that gift. Few can handle this gift and thus few are given it; and none should seek it. But for those who have been given this gift, they must humble themselves daily before God to know how He would have them use it. In the spiritual and the material realms, to whom much has been given, much will be required (Rom 12:6-8; Luke 12:48).

### **Week 11, Day 3: Patience, endurance, and the valuable crop, Part I. (5:7-11)**

In verses 1-6, James has described the oppression of the believing poor by the wealthy. The conditions described are quite appalling. They are probably the very conditions that prompted this letter. To encourage his brethren, James comes full-circle to his first exhortation: we need patience and endurance in the midst of our trials. He writes in verse 7:

“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.”

James is saying that God is going to correct all the wrongs and sins that have been committed against the faithful when Jesus returns. The attitude of the believer is to be that of patience, not revenge. This is difficult to obey. Our natural tendency is to turn on those oppressing us; to wish them ill. But James encourages his brethren to a high calling. He reminds them that God will return and take care of those who oppress them (vs 7-8). God will avenge those who hurt us (Rom 12:19-21). We are not capable of meting out a proper punishment to those who hurt us. God knows all the circumstances and all the thoughts of those involved. He will judge everyone perfectly.

Instead of revenge, James exhorts us to patience and endurance. The reason for the need for patience and endurance is illustrated in three word-pictures: the farmer (vs 7), the prophets (vs 10), and Job (vs 11). In each situation the outcome of their patience or endurance was God's blessing. The farmer received his “precious produce” (“valuable crop,” NIV), the prophets were spokesmen for God, and Job was blessed both spiritually and materially from God. The three key words or phrases of this passage are patience, endurance, and valuable crop, or precious produce (NASB). It is this last phrase that should catch our attention. The picture of the farmer in verse 7 is that of a man who is willing to wait patiently for the early and late rains of the season, knowing that these 'showers of blessings' will be the means by which his valuable crop will be produced. The early rains allow the seed to germinate and begin to grow. The latter rains continue the growth of the plant to full maturity. This produces the hundred-fold increase of seed which is the goal of the farmer. The patience of the farmer demands trust in God (or at

least in 'nature' for the unbeliever) that the rains will come. He can endure the wait for the goal set before him.

The term valuable crop or precious produce is literally in the Greek *precious fruit*. The word fruit was previously used by James to describe the outcome of God's wisdom in our lives: righteousness (James 3:18). Paul uses this same word in Romans 6:19-22, where it is translated as *benefit*:

“For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit [fruit] were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit [fruit], resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”

The benefit, or fruit, of presenting ourselves as bond-servants to Christ is sanctification and eternal life. This indeed is precious fruit. James began his letter describing the sanctification process:

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2-4)

But if one does not learn from the trials that God allows in our lives, if one does not seek the wisdom that comes from God, but prefers to seek the riches of this world, we will end up wandering further and further from God and we may become just like the wealthy who oppress us! We will become like those we are tempted to hate. Instead, James instructs us to:

“Be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.” (vs 8)

The Greek word for strengthen is *stērizō*. According to Zodhiates (1992), it means to *establish* one's heart; “to *turn resolutely* in a set direction.” The verb tense indicates that it is a command, to begin now to establish our hearts (Zodhiates, 1992). James is saying that just like the farmer, we too need to be patient; we need to set our hearts resolutely on following after God, “for the coming of the Lord is near.” We must determine to be single-minded toward the Lord, for Jesus will someday return, and we do not want to be ashamed of our behavior. As the Apostle John wrote:

“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He is revealed we may have confidence, and not be shamed from Him in His coming.” (1 John 2:28; Green, 1986)

James' primary goals in writing this letter are to exhort his brethren to accept their trials with joy, knowing that the outcome of their trials is the peaceful fruit of righteousness, and to prevent them from straying from the truth (James 5:19).

## **Week 11, Day 4: Patience, endurance, and the valuable crop, Part II. (5:7-11)**

In verses 7 and 8, James exhorted his brethren to be patient. According to Blue (BKC, 1983), the word literally means to be *long tempered*; “the idea is to set the timer of one's temper for a long run . . . have a long fuse.” James exhorted us earlier to be “quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger” (1:19). We need to be ready to listen to what God wants to teach us. And we are not to complain; not to God or “against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door” (vs 9). This is difficult to obey in our own strength. Even though we may be oppressed by the wealthy – even those professing to be our brothers in Christ – we must not complain against each other. Why? Because God is going to judge our conduct. Yes, He will most definitely judge those that have oppressed us, but we are to concern ourselves with our own conduct, not theirs. The difficulty of the situation does not lessen our responsibility. Peter gave the same instructions to servants:

“Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.” (1 Pet 2:18)

This almost seems unfair of God. But when we remember what man [include ourselves] did to Jesus in the mock trial and treatment of Him before the cross, plus the excruciating sufferings of His crucifixion, we can hardly complain, can we? He can demand our obedience in this area, not only as the God of the universe, but as the Suffering Servant.

As an example of God's demand for patience, James points to the prophets (vs 10). These men were spokesmen for God, specifically sent to deliver His message. One would think that they would get supernatural protection at all times. Sometimes they did get supernatural protection – think of Daniel (Dan 6) and his three companions (Dan 3). More often they were mistreated and sometimes killed:

“. . . others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised.” (Heb 11:36-38)

All these suffered greatly and waited patiently for God's promise of the coming Messiah. They didn't see Him come in their lifetime, but they didn't complain. They remained faithful to God. This is James' exhortation to us. Remain faithful to God, without complaint, even in the midst of suffering.

James third illustration of endurance is Job. James does not use the word 'patience' or phrase 'not complaining' when it comes to Job. He lacked patience and He did complain. But here James proclaims that “the Lord is full of compassion and is

merciful” (vs 11). Even though Job complained to others and to God Himself, God blessed Job because He did not give up his faith. He endured the horrible trials handed to him – the loss of his sons and daughters, his property and possessions (Job 1:13-19), and his health (Job 2:7-8). At first Job accepted his calamities amazingly well, but then, as time wore on, he struggled with his trial. Though he complained, he never gave up his faith in God. And God blessed Job. He healed Job of his painful boils, blessed him and his wife with more sons and daughters, restored two-fold all his earthly possessions, and gave Job a long life (Job 42:10, 13, 16-17). Obviously, not all of our trials will end this way. But we need to take note of what James is saying. Although Job did not endure without complaining or impatience, he *did* endure. That is James point. None of us will endure our trials perfectly, but we must try to endure them. And if we fail this time, we must lean on the Lord the next time. God is compassionate and full of mercy (vs 11). He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). But we must allow God to do His work in us. As James says:

“We count those blessed who have endured.” (vs 11)

Therefore,

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2-4)

The Apostle John adds,

“Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.” (1 John 2:28)

## **Week 11, Day 5: Honesty and humility before God. (5:12-13)**

In verse 12, James exhorts us not to swear – that is, we are not to make an oath by heaven or earth or any other thing. Instead, we are to let our 'yes' mean yes and our 'no' mean no. At first reading, this does not seem to flow with the previous context of enduring trials (vs 7-11). In fact, several commentators think that James has changed topics. But on further examination, there does appear to be a flow of thought that introduces yet more Godly wisdom.

Verse 12 is a condensed version of what Jesus said in Matthew 5:34-37 :

“But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.”

Commenting on these verses in Matthew, Carson and Hendriksen agree that the

emphasis is on the importance of truthfulness. “It is characteristic of certain individuals who are aware that their reputation for veracity is not exactly outstanding that the more they lie the more they will also assert that what they are saying is the 'gospel truth'” (Hendriksen, 1973). “If oaths designed to encourage truthfulness becomes occasions for clever lies and casuistical deceit, Jesus will abolish oaths (v.34). For the direction in which the OT points is the fundamental importance of thorough and consistent truthfulness” (Carson, 1984). In addition, the phrase “yes yes and no no” seemed to be commonly used to express truthfulness (cf. 2 Cor 1:17-18).

What James appears to be saying in verse 12 is that our response to the call to endure trials must not be done in our own strength. We must not make oaths to claim our sincerity: “by heaven, I will endure!” We don't even have control of what tomorrow will bring (James 4:14) and must not make business plans apart from God's involvement (4:15). Why then should we think we can endure hardships – that may come from the devil himself (1 Pet 5:8) – in our own strength? To do so will surely end in failure and condemnation: “so that you may not fall under judgment” (vs 12). What James is calling us to do is to be absolutely honest with God, ourselves, and our brethren in the faith. We cannot endure these trials in our own strength and must be willing to ask for God's help and also from our brethren (vs 16). In this light, verse 12 then flows into verses 13 and 14:

“Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray . . . “

If anyone is suffering in the body of Christ, he must pray. Moo (1985) points out that the word suffering used in verse 13 is the same word for the suffering of the prophets used in verse 10. “The prayer believers are to offer in such circumstances is not necessarily for deliverance from the trial, but for the strength to endure it faithfully” (Moo, 1985). This indeed is excellent advice. But the most important aspect of James advice is to *pray*. Prayer is talking to God honestly. We might not be able to ask for endurance. We might be so down, so wearied, that we might be able only to ask for escape. The imperative is to go to God for mercy:

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb 4:15-16)

We must not profess faith we are lacking. We must be honest with God and as James has already said, “humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up” (James 4:10, NIV).

After receiving help from God, our hearts will be cheered. We must then thank God and sing songs of praise to Him (vs 13). As Burdick points out, “This too is prayer” (EBC, 1981). Burdick also points out that “verses 13-16 constitute a call for prayer in every circumstance.” This is key to the Christian life. In good times and in bad, we must pray for ourselves and for our brothers, for we “have seen the outcome of

the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful” (vs 11). In humility, let us draw near to God so that He will draw near to us (vs 8, 10).

[References for Matthew 5:34-37: D.A. Carson, 1984. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. and W. Hendriksen, 1973. The New Testament Commentary. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.]

## **Week 12, Day 1: Prayer, Part I. (5:14-18)**

Besides finances, another area where our faith can sometimes be severely tested (James 1:3) is that of our personal health.

### *Prayer for health*

In verses 14-15, James exhorts those who are sick to call for the elders of the church, who will pray for him and anoint him with oil. For some, this will be vary natural; for others it will require humility. The exhortation to call for the elders is given to the sick, or at least to their family if one is very ill.

The elders are “to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (vs 14). The use of oil (usually olive oil) in that region was quite common. Anointing with oil had at least five meanings:

1. Comfort: the hot, dry weather of Israel and the surrounding region required the use of oil to prevent the drying of skin. It was regularly used on the face, scalp, and sometimes the arms (Moo, 1985; Unger, 1971).
2. Honor a guest: the offer of oil for the purposes of comfort (above), was a way to honor a guest (Luke 7:46).
3. Cosmetic: oil was somehow used to present oneself at their best (Ruth 3:3), giving “the skin and hair a smooth and comely appearance” (Unger, 1971).
4. Medicinal: oil was associated with healing. It is referred to by Christ in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Oil and wine were applied on the victim's wounds (Luke 10:34). It was also used by Christ's disciples in association with healing when He had commissioned the twelve (Mark 6:13).
5. Symbolic: the anointing<sup>1</sup> oil was used to consecrate people for God's work (e.g. Ex 28:41 and 29:7). It symbolized the anointing of the Holy Spirit in one's life (e.g. 1 Sam 16:13).

It is probably this last meaning that James has in mind. But the symbolism of the oil is not required to heal anyone. James says to anoint the sick person “with oil *in the name of the Lord*.” It is the power of God that heals people. Thus, Peter used this same phrase when he spoke to a lame man:

“Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth* rise up and walk.' And he took him by the right

---

<sup>1</sup>In Ex 40:15 and Num 3:3 of the Septuagint, the Greek word for anoint (*aleiphō*) is the same as used in James 5:14 (Moo, 1985).

hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.” (Acts 3:6-8, KJV)

James' reasons for anointing with oil were not due to some mystical powers of the oil. When used in conjunction with the name of Jesus Christ, its purpose was to focus the attention of both the sick man and the elders that the healing that would take place was all by the power of God, not by the power of man.

“And the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.” (vs 15)

Faith in God, not any merit of our own, is the means by which healing will be granted. We do not deserve to be healed; it is due entirely to God's grace. This is why we are saved. It is entirely due to His grace. However, unlike our spiritual 'healing,' i.e. our salvation, physical healing is not always God's will for someone's life. The Apostle Paul requested three times that he would be healed from an ailment, yet God denied it (2 Cor 12:7-9). God had a purpose in Paul's life in not healing him. Paul states that it was to keep him humble. Thus, when James says the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, we must couple that with the preceding verse that said that the elders' prayer with the anointing of oil was *in the name of the Lord*. The phrase 'the name of the Lord' takes into account His will. God's grace is given to us so that our lives might glorify Jesus Christ (2 Thes 1:8). If it is God's will, the prayer of faith will heal the sick man, for the glory of God.

We must not think that God's will to heal is limited to the first century Christian church. He still miraculously heals today, especially in areas where modern medical help is not available. Most of the recorded miracles of Jesus and His apostles were for illnesses that were beyond the abilities of the physicians of that day. Many were beyond the abilities of medical science even today. If an illness is within the ability of medical science, God will most likely have us utilize that avenue of healing. But we must not forget to pray that God will help those physicians! In addition, Paul recommended a health remedy for Timothy's stomach ailments (1 Tim 5:23). Medicine should not be shunned. God has given each of us common sense, and He expects us to use it.

It should be noted that verses 14 and 15 have been interpreted differently by a few commentators. For example, Blue (BKC, 1983) suggests that James' reference to those who are sick is really to those who are spiritually weak. Ryrie (1995) explains it this way: “Some understand the word *sick* in verse 14 to refer to spiritual, not physical, weakness and the different word translated *sick* in verse 15 to mean 'weary' (these meanings are legitimate). Thus the discouraged person will be restored to spiritual vigor by the elders' prayer and anointing.” Many commentators, especially Moo (1985), object to this interpretation. Whichever interpretation is correct, we should keep in mind that the elders will gladly pray for those who are either physically ill or spiritually weary. Both our physical and spiritual welfare are of prime concern to them; God has placed that concern in them (Acts 20:28).

## **Week 12, Day 2: Prayer, Part II. (5:14-18)**

*Pray for each other*

If one calls for the elders to pray for him, most likely he is in an attitude of humility and desires God's help in his life. With the desire for physical healing, the wise elders of the church will seek to make sure the man has a right relationship with God. This will begin with asking for the forgiveness of sins. God, who did not spare His own Son for this very purpose, is always willing to forgive. With that in mind, James instructs all the congregations he is writing to seek God's forgiveness (vs 16). This will include confessing our sins to each other so that others can pray with us to help us overcome our weaknesses. It may also include confessing sins committed against someone else (Matt 5:23-24) and forgiving those who have sinned against us (Mark 11:25-26). James exhorts us to pray for each other (vs 16). The writer of Hebrews exhorts us to spur each other on to good works, not forsaking the assembling together, but encouraging one another during these last days (Heb 10:24-25). This will result in both physical and spiritual healing (vs 16).

James encourages the brethren to pray for each other because it can accomplish so much. He describes what prayer can do this way:

“Very strong is a petition of a righteous man, being made effective.”  
(vs 16; lit. trans. by Green, 1986)

In contrast to the double-minded man that James has been addressing for much of the letter, James says that the single-minded (i.e. righteous) man's prayer is a very strong petition before God. When He hears the request of one of His children whose heart is wholly His, He acts! And when God takes action, things happen! The righteous man's prayer is made effective and accomplishes great things because God commands it to be so. What is so amazing in James' statement is the weight or influence that the single-minded man's request has with God. It reminds us of 2 Chronicles 17:3:

“For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.”

James then gives an illustration that was very familiar to his readers: the prayer of Elijah.

*Elijah: an illustration of the petition of a righteous man made effective*

James tells us that Elijah was not made of different material than us. He “was a man with a nature like ours” (vs 17). And yet, when he prayed that the rain would stop, God answered him. And when three and one-half years later he prayed that the rains would begin, God again answered him. If you look at the events that James is referring to (1 Kings 17-18) we see two significant factors in relation to Elijah's prayer. First, he was a man of God, as the widow of Zarephath testified (1 Kings 17:24). Second, Elijah's prayers and actions were in obedience to the direction of God:

“O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are

God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word.” (1 Kings 18:36)

The single-minded man's prayer is according to the will of God. Naturally, God will answer that prayer and it will be effective. Elijah's prayer in 1 Kings 18:36 was spoken in the context of the challenge to and victory over the priests of Baal versus God. The prophets of Baal could not invoke their god to send fire down on their sacrificial altar. But God sent fire that consumed the sacrifice, the altar, and the 12 pitchers of water that had just been poured on the altar. The purpose of this event is declared by Elijah in 1 Kings 18:37:

1. that the people would know that the Lord is God, and
2. that God would *turn their hearts back to Him*.

What a fitting end to James' letter. These purposes were also James' as wrote his letter to the saints dispersed abroad. God calls us to:

- a) recognize that the things of this world are temporary and blessed is the man that accepts and perseveres under trials (James 1:2-4, 10-12), and
- b) be single-minded toward Him (James 4:7-10).

James asks those are are single-minded in the faith to join him in this endeavor (James 5:19-20). We look at this tomorrow.

### **Week 12, Day 3: Join in ministering to the body. (5:19-20)**

In the closing verses of James' letter (vs 7-18), he has exhorted his brethren to patiently endure the trials set before them so that the 'fruit' of those trials can have their perfect effect (vs 7-11), to be totally honest with God and each other (vs 12), to be humble before God and fellow brethren by calling for the elders' help when needed (vs 13-15), and to be transparent with each other – confess that we are sinners, and thus, in need of each other's prayers (vs 16). James now closes his epistle with an appeal to join him in being actively involved in the lives of the brethren, by seeking out those that have wandered from the truth (vs 19-20). Throughout his letter, James has warned the brethren of the dangers of not accepting what God is teaching us through trials and His Word, and of our unresponsiveness to the needs of others. A faith that works is a faith that shows mercy to those that are in need, both physically (e.g. James 2:15-16) and now spiritually (James 5:19-20). James writes:

“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” (vs 19-20)

Commentators differ on the spiritual status of the one who strays (wanders, NIV) from the truth. Is James exhorting us to seek out in our assembly those who have

never been saved or to turn back our true brothers in Christ that have wandered from the truth of the gospel? And is this 'death' that James speaks of physical or spiritual death? Here are some varying views:

Burdick (EBC, 1981)

“That this cannot be physical death may be inferred from the literal translation of the Greek text: it 'shall save his soul from death.' So it would seem that spiritual death is in view. Since Scripture teaches that once a person is regenerated he can never be lost, it may be assumed that his hypothetical wanderer is not a genuine believer. He would be one who had been among the believers and had made a profession of faith, but his profession had been superficial. To bring him to genuine faith in the truth is to save his soul from eternal death. The result of bringing the wanderer back is that 'many sins' will be covered. Genuine faith brings full forgiveness of the wanderer's sins; and they are covered, never to be held against him again.”

Blue (BKC, 1983)

“Wandering ones need to be brought back to the fold. James referred here not to evangelism but to restoration. Revival, not redemption, is in view. The rescue action is of great significance. A lost sheep is saved from destruction and his sins (the sins of the restored one, not the restorer) are covered as if a veil were thrown over them (cf. I Peter 4:8). He can move ahead again on the path toward spiritual maturity.”

Adamson (1976)

“In 5:19, *if one among you . . .*, James is speaking, not comprehensively of the population among whom his hearers are living, but of 'one of you' Christians, who has fallen into some habit of false doctrine or, probably more often, of sinful practice. As instances of 'saving' in this sense with a human subject Ropes [Adamson is referring to another commentator] cites Rom. 11:14; I Cor. 7:16; and I Tim. 4:16. The soul is that of the erring brother; see 1:21. Death, from which he is saved, is the penalty of sin, as in 1:15, and under the covenant 'final exclusion from the Divine Society' (I John 5:16; so Westcott).”

Kistemaker (1996)

“‘If one of you should wander.’ James singles out the individual in the community when he refers to one or any one (vs. 13, 14). If someone belonging to the church happens to wander from the truth either on his own volition or under the influence of others (see 1:16), the believers ought to know that they are responsible for the spiritual welfare of this wandering brother or sister. In a sense, James proclaims the same message of urgency that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews communicates:

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. [3:12-13]

“The readers ought to practice mutual care (Gal 6:1), so that the believers continue to adhere to the truth.”

Whether your theology has you believe that the one straying (wandering, NIV) from the truth is one who has only professed to be a Christian and in reality is not, or whether it is a Christian whose heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, the end of this person's road is disaster: his soul is in danger of eternal death. James has been imploring the double-minded to submit to God and resist the devil, to draw near to God so that He will draw near to us, to humble ourselves in the presence of the Lord so that He can lift us up (James 4:7-10). We are not to look the other way when our brother starts to stray. As Kistemaker (1996) puts it, we must not yield “to the temptation of placing erring members on the inactive list of the church rolls.” Rather, we must seek to turn the wayward from his sins:

“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.” (Gal 6:1-2)

The law of Christ is the same as James' royal law (2:8), the law of liberty (2:12). Because we have been shown mercy by God, we must show mercy to others (2:12-13). We must allow mercy to triumph over judgment. As we seek out the wayward, we will co-labor with Christ in saving his soul from death and covering a multitude of sins. We will also avoid a sin of omission on our part (James 4:17).

#### **Week 12, Day 4: A practical review for enduring trials.**

- Trials are allowed by our merciful and compassionate God.
- Trials cannot last forever; there is an end. This lifetime is short in comparison to the eternal life that awaits us.
- The world's riches are temporal. God's riches are eternal.
- The injustices of this world will be set right at the Lord's return.
- The trials are changing us into mature images of His Son. This is a precious commodity (James 5:7; Heb 12:11) that is to be desired.
- In the midst of trials we need to look forward to the joy set before us: the mature nature, the wrongs being set right, being with Christ forever.
- We must be honest with each other, pray for each other, and seek to restore relationships among ourselves and, for those who stray, with God.

As members of God's household, we are to accept His discipline, hear and do what He asks of us, live in a manner worthy of God's children, be loving to all our brothers and sisters – helping them when they need help, never speak harshly of others, avoid the pleasures of this world by seeking the pleasure of His presence, and seek to encourage our brothers and sisters in the midst of their trials. The testing of our faith is hard; but it is certain and necessary. The end result is the peaceful fruit of His righteousness. We all will encounter trials and testing. We must therefore help each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. As we've seen, James speaks of a *faith that works*.

It is love in action. It is a faith that affects the lives of others. The first fruit of the Holy Spirit is love (Gal 5:22). Total surrender to God is how it happens.

## References (for James)

Adamson, J. B. 1976. *The Epistle of James*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

American Heritage Dictionary. 1992. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. Third Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, New York, USA.

AmpNT. 1958. *The Amplified New Testament*. Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

BKC. 1983. Walvoord, J. F. and Zuck, R. B., editors. Blue, J. R., contributor to James. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary. An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty*. New Testament Edition. Victor Books, USA, Canada, England.

Boa, K. D. and Wilkinson, B.H. 1990. "Visual Survey of the Bible." From the *New Open Bible Study Edition, New American Standard Bible*. Thomas Nelson Publishers and The Lockman Foundation.

Brenton, Sir Lancelot C. L. 1992. *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*. Fourth Printing. Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, USA. Original Printing, 1851, by Bagster & Sons, London, England.

Broomall, W. 1990. "Topical Index to the Bible." From the *New Open Bible Study Edition, New American Standard Bible*. Thomas Nelson Publishers and The Lockman Foundation.

EBC. 1981. Gaebelein, F.E., general editor. Burdick, D.W., contributor to James. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version*. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

Green, J.P, Sr. 1986. *The Interlinear Bible, Hebrew-Greek-English*. Sovereign Grace Publishers, Lafayette, Indiana, USA.

Halley, H. H. 1965. *Halley's Bible Handbook. An Abbreviated Bible Commentary*. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

Kistemaker, S.J. 1996. *Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter and Jude*. New Testament Commentary. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

Luck, G. C. 1954. *James: Faith in Action*. Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Marshall, A. 1986. *NASB-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English with Interlinear Translation by Alfred Marshall*. The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

(MLB) Modern Language Bible. The New Berkeley Version in Modern English. 1969. From the Layman's Parallel Bible, © 1973. The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

Moo, D. J. 1985. James: An Introduction and Commentary. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

(NTME) New Testament in Modern English. 1972. J.B. Phillips. The Macmillan Company. New York, New York, USA.

(NASBEC) New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. 1981. Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries. Holman, Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

(NASB) New American Standard Bible. The New Open Bible Study Edition. 1990. Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

(NIV) The New International Version. 1984. Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

(NKJV) The New King James Version. 1997. Nelson's NKJV Study Bible. Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

Ryrie, C. C. 1995. Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition. New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update. Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

(TEV) 1992. Today's English Version or the Good News Bible. American Bible Society. New York, New York, USA.

Unger, M. F., 1966. Unger's Bible Handbook. An Essential Guide to Understanding the Bible. Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Unger, M. F., 1971. Unger's Bible Dictionary. Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Vincent, M. R., 1886. Word Studies in the New Testament. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Peabody, Massachusetts, USA. (Hendrickson reprint publication undated; originally published in 1886).

Vine, W. E. 1940. An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers. Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, New Jersey, USA.

World Book Encyclopedia. 1988. World Book, Inc. Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Wuest, K. R. 1945. Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament. *From:* Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament. Three-volume edition, 1973. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA.

Zodhiates, S. 1991. The Complete Word Study New Testament, King James Version. AMG Publishers. Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA.

Zodhiates, S. 1992. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testatment. AMG Publishers. Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA.