

James Chapter 5 Continued

James 5:11 "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

"The patience of Job": Job is the classic example of a man who patiently endured suffering and was blessed by God for his persevering faith. James reassured his readers that God had a purpose for their suffering, just as He did for Job's (read Job chapter 42).

"Very pitiful, and of tender mercy": Remembering the Lord's character is a great comfort in suffering. The Scriptures repeatedly affirm His compassion and mercy. (Luke 6:36).

In the last lesson, we spoke of the patience of Job. He was, perhaps, the most patient person in persecution in all the Bible. "Endure" has a meaning which means continuance. To endure means to last until the end.

We do know that the Lord is full of mercy and grace. It is by His mercy that any of us are given the opportunity of salvation. Over, and over, in the Bible, we see statements where the Lord has heard the cries of His people and answered them. He is there in time of need for all of us.

James 5:12 "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and [your] nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."

"Above all": Or "especially." As he has done repeatedly in his epistle, James stressed that a person's speech provides the most revealing glimpse of his spiritual condition (1:26; 2:12; 3:2-11; 4:11).

"Swear not ... any other oath": As Jesus did before him (Matt. 5:33-36; 23:16-22), James condemned the contemporary Jewish practice of swearing false, evasive, deceptive oaths by everything other than the name of the Lord (which alone was considered binding).

"Yea be yea": Again, echoing Jesus (Matt. 5:37), James called for straight-forward, honest, plain speech. To speak otherwise is to invite God's judgment.

"Above all things": James is not saying that the pronouncement of oaths involves his greatest teaching in the book. But he connects it (with verses 7-11; possibly also verses 1-6), as an important instruction concerning the suffering of affliction. He admonishes believers not to curse or invoke God's wrath on those who mistreat them.

We know of the warning in the Sermon on the Mount about swearing.

Matthew 5:34 "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:"

Matthew 5:36 "Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black."

Anything more than a simple yes or no is presuming that we have more power than we do. We do not want to be condemned of God for thinking too highly of ourselves.

James 5:13 "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms."

"Afflicted" in the verse above, means to undergo hardship. We see then, if we are undergoing hardship, we are to pray. I love to sing the Psalms. It is exciting to sing the Scriptures. So much of the music today is influencing our children in the wrong things. Music influences the lives of the people listening.

If you listen to songs that promote drugs, alcohol, homosexuality, and other sin: you will soon find yourself involved in one, or more, of these activities. On the other hand, if you listen to beautiful Scriptures, set to music, it will cause you to draw closer to God. There is a joy in the Lord that is far greater than any happiness from worldly things.

The antidote to the suffering caused by evil treatment or persecution is seeking God's comfort through prayer (Psalms 27:13-14; 55:22; Jonah 2:7; Phil. 4:6; 1 Peter 5:7).

"Let him sing psalms": The natural response of a joyful heart is to sing praise to God.

Verses 14-15: "Healing": One of the Old Testament names of God is Yahweh-Rapha, meaning "The Lord That Heals" (Exodus 15:26). The healing power of God is evidenced in a number of instances in Scripture. God heals by preserving health (Deut. 8:4), and advising good nutritional habits (Exodus 15:26; Lev. 11), and a healthful life-style (Lev. 12-14); and through the application of medical treatment (James 5:14), forgiveness of disease-causing sin (Num. 12:13), and the prayer of faith (James 5:15).

Although God does not always choose to heal, He sometimes does. When a Christian is sick, he should confess his known sins, and God may heal him if the sickness is caused by sin. He may also be led to ask his elders to anoint him with oil and pray for his healing.

Some diseases experienced by Christians today could be prevented by trusting God as Yahweh-Rapha, and allowing Him to deal with those things in their lives causing stress, anger and worry.

Verses 14-15: "Sick": James directs those who are "sick," meaning weakened by their suffering to call for the elders of the church for strength, support and prayer.

James 5:14 "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:"

“Anointing him with oil”: Literally “rubbing him with oil”:

- (1) Possibly this is a reference to ceremonial anointing (Mark 6:13);
- (2) On the other hand, James may have had in mind medical treatment of believers physically bruised and battered by persecution.

Perhaps it is better to understand the anointing in a metaphorical sense of the elder’s encouraging, comforting and strengthening the believer.

Though God often heals through medicine, the use of oil here is mainly symbolic because;

- (1) It is applied “In the name of the Lord”;
- (2) It is the Lord who will “raise him up;” and
- (3) Luke 10:34 uses a different Greek word to describe the medicinal anointing of an injured traveler.

All believers in Christ have been given authority to use the name of Jesus to heal the sick.

John 14:12-14 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do [it]."

It is the name of Jesus that heals the sick. It is very important for the person who is sick to call for prayer. This shows that he believes he can receive healing. Jesus said, when he healed, Your faith has made you whole.

The anointing with oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit of God. This cannot be just any oil in your cabinet. This must be pure olive oil. Olive oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit of God.

James 5:15 "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

“The prayer of faith”: entails both the prayer of the sick person and the prayer of the elders who in faith meet the requirements of this passage. But it suggests much more, because this faith is effectual. Some sick have had little faith, yet have been healed (Acts 3:4-8); others, like Paul, have had great faith, yet have not been healed (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Further, those who possessed the gift of healing in the early church were at times unable to perform healing as they may have wished (2 Tim. 4:20). The Greek text might suggest this reading: “The prayer produced by that faith will heal.” The prayer that results for true faith is effective. Elijah experienced this prayer of faith (verses 17-18). Elijah knew God’s Word and will, and so persistently prayed (1 Kings 18:36, 37, 42-46).

“Save the sick”: Deliver them from their suffering because they have been weakened by their infirmity, not from their sin, which was confessed.

Faith is people acting in accordance with God's known purpose (1 John 5:14). The prayer of faith does not include a gift of healing. It does not exert extraordinary spiritual strength (Acts 3:12); otherwise all spiritual Christians would be healthy (3 John 2). Nor does it merely involve the ritual (of verse 14). The prayer of faith discerns God's will and perseveres until it is accomplished. God's will, however, is not to heal in every case, and true faith can discern and accept that (Romans 8:26-27).

Not only must the elder who is praying believe, but the person being healed, as well. In some instances, a member of the person's family can stand in for them. If they are not available, it is permissible to have a believer stand in for them.

Whoever is being prayed over must believe to receive the healing. There are exceptions to this, but this is generally speaking. Sometimes a non-believer will be healed as a sign from God. Some people believe everyone who is sick has sin that caused the sickness. That is true in some cases, but not always. Notice the word "if" in the verse above.

"Committed sins ... be forgiven": Not by the elders, since God alone can forgive sins. That those who are suffering called for the elders implies they had a contrite, repentant heart, and that part of their time with the overseers would involve confessing their sins to God.

We also know that people like Paul had an illness not caused by lingering sin in his life. We will see in the next few verses the explanation of this very thing by Jesus.

John 9:1-3 "And as [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man which was blind from [his] birth." "And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

I love the statement, "His sins shall be forgiven him". God does a perfect work, when He heals. He heals the Spirit, as well as the body.

James 5:16 "Confess [your] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

"Confess your faults": Mutual honesty, openness and sharing of needs will enable believers to uphold each other in the spiritual struggle.

"Effectual fervent prayer ... availeth much": The energetic, passionate prayers of godly people have the power to accomplish much (Numbers 11:2).

This answers many questions about prayer. To be truly forgiven for our sins, we must express a sorrow for committing them. This is what the confessing one to another is all about. This is not confession to a minister, but to a friend in Christ. This helps us get it out in the open and deal with it. We are to pray for each other.

We must not just pray for ourselves, but for others. Many times, God takes care of the needs in our lives as we pray for someone else. This healing is body, mind, soul, and spirit. We are not just to pray, but to pray over and over, until we get an answer. This effectual fervent prayer just means that we are earnestly seeking God. It means that we are to continue in this prayer for an answer.

Notice also, that the person doing the praying is righteous (in right standing with God). He or she, is righteous, because they have taken on the righteousness of Christ and been made sons of God. God hears the prayers of His children, and answers them.

Verses 17-18: "Elijah ... prayed ... he prayed again": Elijah provides one of the most notable illustrations of the power of prayer in the Old Testament. His prayers (not mentioned in the Old Testament account), both initiated and ended a 3 year, 6 month drought (Luke 4:25).

James 5:17 "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months."

This is speaking of Elijah. This just explains that Elijah was a human being as we are. We do know that he had great faith and was a righteous man in the sight of God. You can find the Scriptures covering this (in 1 Kings Chapters 17 and 18).

It is very interesting to me that this covers a period of 3-1/2 years (the same amount of time in Revelation, seven years broken into two 3-1/2 year periods).

James 5:18 "And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

This withholding of the rain was for a very good purpose. After the purpose was fulfilled, Elijah prayed and it rained. Notice, the fruit comes after the rain. As I said earlier, this rain could, also, symbolize the Spirit of God, which brings forth fruit, as well.

Verses 19-20: "Any of you": Since James is addressing Christian readers; the errors he mentions may be any of those discussed throughout this epistle.

"Convert" does not here mean to save, but to restore (as in Luke 22:32).

"Death" is the physical death by which God sometimes punishes His disobedient people (Acts 5:5-10; 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16).

James 5:19 "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;"

“If any of you”: This introduces a third category of people in the church (verses 13-14), those professing believers who have strayed from the truth.

“Err from the truth”: Apostatizes from the faith they once professed (Heb. 5:12 – 6:9; 10:29; 1 John 2:19). Such people are in grave danger (verse 20), and the church must call them back to the true faith.

This is speaking of someone who believes in error. "Err", means go astray. Perhaps, this is speaking of the backslidden Christian, as well as the one who has never known the Truth.

James 5:20 "Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

“Sinner”: A word used to describe the unregenerate. James has in mind here those with dead faith (2:14-26), not sinning, true believers.

“The error of his way”: Those who go astray doctrinally (verse 19), will also manifest an errant lifestyle; one not lived according to biblical principles.

“Save a soul from death”: A person who wanders from the truth puts his soul in jeopardy. The “death” in view is not physical death, but eternal death, eternal separation from God and eternal punishment in hell (Isa. 66:24; Dan 12:2; Matt. 13:40, 42, 50; 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43-49; 2 Thess. 1:8-9; Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:11-15; 21:8). Knowing how high the stakes are should motivate Christians to aggressively pursue such people.

“Hide a multitude of sins” (see Psalm 5:10). Since even one sin is enough to condemn a person to hell, James’ use of the word “multitude”, emphasizes the hopeless condition of lost, unregenerate sinners. The good news of the gospel is that God’s forgiving grace (which is greater than any sin; Rom 5:20), is available to those who turn from their sins and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9).

This is speaking to the brethren (of verse 19). Those who lead others to the Lord will have great rewards in heaven.

1 Peter 4:8 "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

It is enough reward to know that someone you have ministered to will be saved, but God has more reward for you than that. We will be judged according to the way we have dealt with our fellowman. If we lead someone to the Lord, it is because we love them. We have put ourselves behind, and are thinking more of their needs than our own.

To the world, ministering to others is foolishness, but to God it is the tool to lead them to salvation.

1 Corinthians 1:18 "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

1 Corinthians 1:21 "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

If you care enough for others to help them find God, God will forgive you of your sins.

James Chapter 5 Continued Questions

1. Who is mentioned in verse 11 who had great patience?
2. The Lord is very _____, and of _____.
3. What does endure mean?
4. It is by God's _____ that we are given the opportunity of salvation.
5. What did James say, was above all?
6. What might happen, if you swore?
7. Where do we find the warning about swearing (Sermon on the Mount)?
8. What are we really saying, when we answer with more than a yes or no?
9. What should we do when we are afflicted?
10. What should we do when we are merry?
11. What does afflicted in verse 13, mean?
12. Music _____ the lives of the people listening.
13. What should the sick do?
14. What should the elders do, before praying for you?
15. Who has the authority to pray in Jesus' name?
16. What is the only oil permissible to use for anointing?
17. What does olive oil symbolize?
18. What saves the sick?

19. What other wonderful blessing comes from this prayer?
20. Name some things that must happen for a prayer to be answered.
21. Is everyone who is sick, sick because of a sin in their life?
22. What did Jesus have to say about this in the 9th chapter of John?
23. What does "effectual fervent prayer" mean?
24. Who are the righteous?
25. Why does God pay more attention to these prayers?
26. Who prayed and caused it not to rain for 3 and 1/2 years?
27. What did the author relate this 3-1/2 year period to?