

Book of James—James 5

Rust as a Witness; Patience; Oaths; Prayer

I. Additional Scriptures/Notes...

5:1... Go to now, ye rich men—“Though the rich are here directly addressed, it is not likely that they were Christians. (1) There is to them no exhortation to repentance; (2) they are not admonished to a better life; and (3) there is to them no promise of reconciliation to God. On the contrary, they are 'to weep and howl,' not in penitence, but in view of impending retribution and ruin. It would appear that the statement of the inspired writer is an *apostrophe*, wherein he turns aside, for the moment, to denounce the rich and to declare their ultimate doom, for the edification of the poor saints who were experiencing oppression at the hands of the rich” [Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, p. 256]. **1-6...** “Another point of justice that is clear in both the book of James and in the other Scriptures is God's insistence upon social justice. In the Old Testament, as well as the New, the prophets have preached vigorously against injustices toward the poor. (Isa. 5:8; Amos 3:10; 5:11; 8:4-7; 11:28; etc). Feeding the hungry and caring for the orphans and widows (but not the indolent lay people) is a common concern of God's Word” [Donald Fream, *A Chain of Jewels from James and Jude*, p. 197].

5:4... kept back by fraud—“I do not know of many popular vices that do not find their way into the church in one form or another and this one is no exception. Instead of recognizing ungodly business men for what James said they are, it is the general practice at more and more places to put such men into the rulership position (call them 'elders') just because they have been successful in business. ... Such a man will rule or ruin. When he rules he will run things as he does his business. The customer is always right, you never argue with anyone, all things must be positive, and growth is the only thing that matters or that works” [Roger Jackson, “Judgment on the Wicked Rich,” in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 227].

5:5... nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter—“...you live as if it were every day a day of sacrifices, a festival; and hereby your hearts are fattened and nourished to stupidity, dullness, pride, and an insensibility to the wants and afflictions of others. Some may say, 'What harm is there in good cheer, provided people do not spend above what they have?' What! Is it no harm for people to make gods of their bellies, and to give all to these, instead of abounding in acts of charity and piety? Is it no harm for people to unfit themselves for minding the concerns of their souls, by indulging the appetites of their bodies? Surely that which brought flames upon Sodom, and would bring these miseries for which rich men are here called to weep and howl, must be a heinous evil! Pride, and idleness, and fullness of bread, mean the same thing with living in pleasure, and being wanton, and nourishing the heart as in a day of slaughter” [*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*].

5:7... Be patient—“The Greek term translated 'patience' in this verse is often rendered 'longsuffering' in other passages (cf., Rom 2:4; Eph 4:2; Col 1:11; 3:12). This attitude will make it possible to endure delays and bear suffering and never give in. The use of the term here, as well as in other passages, reflects patience with persons. This definition gives further credence to the fact that these 'brethren' were being victimized by the ruthless rich of the preceding verses. In such trials the Christian's course of action was

not to give up the faith, nor resort to physical violence, but only to endure delay and bear the suffering without giving in 'until the coming of the Lord'" [Richard Massey, "Patience Enjoined and Swearing Prohibited," in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 233]. Cf., song # 350, "Farther Along," in *Church Gospel Songs and Hymns*.

5:12... swear not—"There may well be a connection between this prohibition and the foregoing instructions on patience. Perhaps the afflictions that these brethren were experiencing were somehow influencing them to make sinful oaths. Under pressure, Peter resorted to this very practice as he swore with an oath that he did not know Jesus (Mt 26:69-75). One thing is certain: This type of swearing and profane oath taking is strongly forbidden, as is indicated by the phrase, **but above all things.**" [Richard Massey, "Patience Enjoined and Swearing Prohibited," in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 245-46]. |||| "That is was not the design of James (and our Lord, in Mt 5:34-37) to forbid *all* oaths, including those of a judicial nature, seems evident from the following considerations: (1) Jesus, before Caiaphas, testified under oath (Mt 26:63-64); (2) Paul often solemnly asserted things in the form of an oath (Rom 1:9; cf., 2 Cor 1:23; Ph 1:8; Gal 1:20); (3) God swore by himself when he could swear by no greater (Heb 6:13); (4) The prophets often involved the names of God in their solemn affirmations (Isa 65:16). Thus the sin forbidden in this section is that of *profanity*; the frivolous, flippant use of the names of God and sacred things" [Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, p. 292]. Cf., Matthew 23:16-22.

5:13... is any merry—"One 'cheerful,' in the original sense of the term, is one in good spirits, one possessed of a frame of mind that is free of anxiety and disturbing problems. The verb also occurs in Acts 27:22, 25, where Paul besought his traveling companions to 'be of good cheer.' The word used by James describes an attitude exactly opposite to that indicated in the word 'suffering,' in the earlier portion of the verse. It is not improbable that the 'suffering' one and the 'cheerful' one of this passage are the same person. That is, he who is suffering is to pray to the Father to lift his burden; and, when it is gone, to be cheerful, and to express such in praise and worship" [Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, p. 297].

5:14-18... For a good article on the two types of prayer James discusses in these verses, go to: <http://lemmonsaid.net/laposts/la0837.htm>

II. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: **The Period of the Church.**

III. Summary.

In the first part of chapter five James takes on the spirit of Amos and many of the other prophets of the Old Testament as he condemns social injustice committed by the rich against the poor. James next urges upon Christians that they learn patience in view of the coming Day of Judgment. In the place of grudging, or murmuring, against one another, James suggests following the example of the prophets who suffered persecution with patience. Job's name comes up in James' instruction as a great example of patience. James urges the brethren to be honest people whose word is their bond so that oaths are not necessary. Prayer and singing are commended. James gives instruction regarding prayer coupled with the supernatural gift of healing; then he also instructs regarding confession of faults, and also, prayers prayed by any righteous person. Having concern for brethren who err from the truth is urged upon us in the last two verses of the chapter.

IV. Outline.

1. Warnings to the wicked wealthy pleasure-seekers (Js 5:1-6).
2. Deal with affliction with patience (7-11).
3. Be honest and avoid oath-taking (12).
4. Pray and sing (13).
5. The prayer of faith shall save the sick (14-15).
6. Confess faults to one another (16).
7. Elijah as an example of one who prayed (17-18).
8. Be interested in those who err from the truth (19-20).

V. Questions.

True or False

01. _____ As a result of Elijah’s prayer it did not rain for ten years.
02. _____ The Name JOB is associated with patience.
03. _____ The prophets are suggested to us as an example of an impatient group of men.
04. _____ The second coming of the Lord is mentioned in James 5.
05. _____ It is not appropriate for Christians to confess their faults to one another.

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. _____ If a preacher entitled his sermon, “Rust as a Witness,” which verse in this chapter would he likely be using as a text: (a) 19; (b) 10; (c) 3.
07. _____ Which Bible characters is used by James to encourage us to pray: (a) Job; (b) Elijah; (c) Jesus.
08. _____ Is it possible to err from the truth: (a) YES; (b) NO.
09. _____ The term VERY is used by James to describe an attribute of the Lord, which: (a) pitiful; (b) strong; (c) kind.
10. _____ To convert a sinner from the error of his way is to: (a) save a soul from death; (b) hide a multitude of sins; (c) neither a nor b; (d) both a & b.

Fill in the Blanks

11. “...The _____ prayer of a righteous man availeth _____.”
12. Since it is stated that, “The prayer of faith _____ the sick...,” in no uncertain terms, James’ instruction must have been intended specifically for elders who had the supernatural gift of healing, a gift which elders today do not have.
13. If we are _____ we should sing psalms.
14. “Your riches are _____, and your garments are _____.”
15. We should let our _____ be _____ and our _____ be _____.

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week’s handout

ANSWERS to James 4 Questions... [(1) True, James 4:8; (2) True, James 4:2; (3) True, James 4:16; (4) False, James 4:6; (5) True, James 4:9; (6) b, James 4:12; (7) a, James 4:1; (8) c, James 4:14; (9) a, James 4:8; (10) c, James 4:3; (11) if, will, live, James 4:15; (12) flee, James 4:7; (13) resists, James 4:6; (14) save, destroy, James 4:12; (15) Knoweth, not, sin, James 4:17.]

VI. Lessons & Applications.

1. **James 5:1-6.** “Have you ever thought about, wished for, or prayed for wealth? Do you think you would be strong enough to handle it? I have seen wealth change a lot of good

people. That is not to be blamed on the wealth, for the Bible says the love of money is the real culprit (1 Tm 6:10). I do know this: the fact that statistics show that the average contribution *per capita* in the Lord's church is two or three per cent is a good indication that most of my brethren could not handle it because they are not faithful in the little they have (Luke 16:10). The abundant life consists of more than material wealth. We must first seek the kingdom and the righteousness of God (Mt 6:33). When we do that we are promised that we will have enough (Ph 4:19). The best advice is inspired advice, and that advice is, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee' (Heb 13:5). 'And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition (1 Tm 6:8-9)' [Roger Jackson, "Judgment on the Wicked Rich," in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 231].

2. **Be patient** (Js 5:7). "Regardless of how broad one's educational background might be, or the depth of his Biblical knowledge, or even the measure of his loyalty to the kingdom of God, no man is spiritually complete without one specific fundamental quality: patience (Js 1:2-4; Gal 5:22-23; 2 Pt 1:5-11). Our present age of overnight express, push button conveniences, and slick solutions requires minimal patience and provides scant opportunity to develop any. Unlike the worldly life of comfort and ease, the Christian life is filled with many difficult challenges (Luke 9:23; Acts 14:22; 2 Tm 3:12). The strait and narrow course that leads its sojourners to the glistening city of eternal day is replete with demanding challenges which necessitate a patient, longsuffering spirit (Mt 7:13-14; Ps 23:4). Along this avenue there will be a world of rigorous toil (Mt 25:34-40; Mk 16:15; Jn 4:34-35; 1 Cor 15:58), many grueling spiritual battles (1 Tm 6:12; 2 Tm 2:3-4), an abundant array of appealing temptations to overcome (Js 1:12-15; 1 Pt 2:11; 1 Jn 2:15-17), and last but not least, persecutions (2 Tm 3:12; 1 Pt 4:12). Salvation will not come easily. For the Christian successfully to complete his journey and arrive safely upon Heaven's shore, he must give all diligence to add patience as one of the characteristics which will dominate his life (2 Pt 1:5-11). There exists a desperate need for more teaching and emphasis to be placed upon the vital subject of Christian endurance" [Richard Massey, "Patience Enjoined and Swearing Prohibited," in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 232].
3. **Grudge not one against another...** (Js 5:9). The ASV has the word MURMUR here for GRUDGE. "Murmuring is a sin that Christians must avoid. Patience and murmuring are incompatible. Murmuring is an attitude of unthankfulness. Characteristically it is not concerned with pleasing God; rather it seeks to satisfy self. The pleasant unity, which is such a blessing among brethren (Ps 133:1), is disrupted by the aggravated grumbler. ... The remedy for murmuring is found in such commands as 1 Corinthians 10:10-11, ... The message is loud and clear: 'God destroys murmurers.' " [Richard Massey, "Patience Enjoined and Swearing Prohibited," in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 238]. Cf., Ph 2:14-15.
4. **Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience** (Js 5:10). There are many fine ways to study the Bible. One of the most helpful is through a study of Bible characters. James is recommending just such a study to the saints in the first century and certainly we benefit greatly today from such a study. Those faithful Bible characters are some of the first heroes that our young children should have as we bring them into our Bible classes. Our learning from those Bible characters is a never-ending process as we continue to grow in Christ. We have the record of many Bible characters

who did the WRONG thing and we learn from them what NOT to do. Whenever we begin to think that we have great problems, we can always remind ourselves of the suffering of Job and so many lessons can be learned and remembered from those men and women, boys and girls about whom we read in Scripture!

5. **...but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation** (Js 5:12). The basic teaching of this passage is that Christians are to be people who keep their word. We are not to make a promise and then neglect to keep it. People should be able to depend upon that which we say. We should have no need whatsoever to “prop up” our statements with some kind of oaths. Least of all should we be guilty of using the name of our God in vain, whether it be through direct use of His name or through some sort of euphemism. All such endangers our souls (Eph 4:29; Col 3:8-9).
6. **Is any sick among you?...** (Js 5:14). There is much discussion among commentators about whether this sickness is physical or spiritual. Since the words, “**and if he have committed sins...**” are added to verse 15, it seems to me that the first part of the verse surely is speaking of physical sickness. Those words seem to be added to the fact of the physical sickness. The two verses do not mention any REPENTANCE on the part of the sick person, which would have to be present before there would be any effect of prayers for forgiveness of sins. The only action mentioned are actions taken by the elders who come, not by the one who calls. If it is sin-sickness or spiritual sickness, there would surely be mentioned that this prayer would be prayed AFTER the repentance of the erring member. The fact that there is given the assurance that **the prayer of faith shall save the sick**, can only be explained by the fact that the elders who are called were recipients of the supernatural spiritual gift of healing which would have been received by the laying on of hands of an apostle. That these instructions were limited to that time and for special purposes should be obvious.
7. **Let him know...** (Js 5:20). These words seem to be here for the purpose of ENCOURAGING just this kind of work. We certainly should have a strong desire to be part of a work that leads to the hiding of a multitude of sins. Helping the brother or sister who has fallen away to come back into faithfulness to the Lord surely is a work that is worthy of all of our very best efforts. It is a work that must not be neglected!

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.

P I U Y P A T I E N C E O F J O B T R E
W O Q A Z X S W S E D C H V F R T G B N
H Y F U J M K I O V P O I A K U J M N H
Y T G T H E L O R D E B V F P R E D W C
X S W Q E Z X S W E D R C V F P R T H G
B N H Y U N J M K I O L Y P I K Y U I Y
H C D E R F D V B G T E Y P U J M T C X
A X S E W E D E C C C F R T I B R E H D
V C V L F R T G R N B N H Y U T M I E N
E N H P Y T G B E M V F R E D C I X N S
S W Q M A Z X I S W E E D C N V F F D B
P B G A T Y T U J M K R I O O Y T G U V
O V F X R A E D C X S W C Q I A Z X R L
K T H E P R O P H E T S C Y T V F R E N
E B G N R F V C D E W S X Z C Q A Z X V
N V F A R T G B N H Y U J M I B G T R F
V F R R E D C X S W Q A Z X L C D E R F
V F R O F S U F F E R I N G F B G T Y Z
C D E F R F V B G T Y H N Q F A Z X S W
C D E R F V B T G N H Y U J A Q A D R L

[The highlighted words can be found above. They may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. DRL]

James 5:10-11...¹⁰Take, my brethren, THE PROPHETS, who HAVE SPOKEN in the name of the Lord, FOR AN EXAMPLE OF SUFFERING AFFLICTION, and of PATIENCE.¹¹Behold, 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.

ANAGRAMS: From the letters of the word, GRUDGE (5:9), we can form four 4-letter words...

(1) _____; (2) _____; (3) _____; (4) _____.

A crossword puzzle on this chapter can be found online by clicking [H-E-R-E](#).