

# James 5 Commentary

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See also [Overview Chart](#) by Charles Swindoll

## JAMES Faith for Living

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The reliance of living faith on God (James 5:13–18)

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- A. The assumed restoration of one erring (James 5:19)
- B. The assured results of the restoration (James 5:20) ([Hiebert's Commentaries – James](#))

**James 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.**

NET James 5:1 Come now, you rich! Weep and cry aloud over the miseries that are coming on you.

GNNT James 5:1 γε ν ν ο πλο σιοι, κλα σατε λολ ζοντες π τα ζ ταλαιπωρ αις μ ν τα ζ περχομ ναις.

NLT James 5:1 Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you.

KJV James 5:1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

ESV James 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.

ASV James 5:1 Come now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you.

CSB James 5:1 Come now, you rich people! Weep and wail over the miseries that are coming on you.

NIV James 5:1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you.

NKJ James 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!

NRS James 5:1 Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you.

YLT James 5:1 Go, now, ye rich! weep, howling over your miseries that are coming upon you;

NAB James 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries.

NJB James 5:1 Well now, you rich! Lament, weep for the miseries that are coming to you.

GWN James 5:1 Pay attention to this if you're rich. Cry and moan about the misery that is coming to you.

BBE James 5:1 Come now, you men of wealth, give yourselves to weeping and crying because of the bitter troubles which are coming to you.

■ **Come now** Jas 4:13

■ **you rich:** Jas 1:11 2:6 De 8:12-14 32:15 Ne 9:25,26 Job 20:15-29 Ps 17:14 Ps 49:6-20 73:3-9,18-20 Pr 11:4,28 Ec 5:13,14 Jer 9:23 Mic 6:12 Zep 1:18 Mt 19:23,24 Lu 6:24 12:16-21 16:19-25 1Ti 6:9,10 Rev 6:15-17

■ **weep and howl :** Jas 4:9 Isa 13:6 22:12,13 Jer 4:8 Eze 19:2 Joe 1:5,11,13 Am 6:6,7 Zec 11:2,3 Lu 6:25 23:28,29

■ James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**WARNING TO**

## THE RICH

After dealing with the businessmen in James 4:13-17+, he turns to the wicked wealthy. This section could be subtitled "Woe to the Wicked Rich." From the context the rich are apparently not believers. James now addresses the earthly rich and warns of their certain coming spiritual poverty in light of their wealthy wickedness. James does not condemn riches (cf Pr 10:22) but the wickedness that so often traffics with wealth. James' warning against the rich oppressing the poor recalls similar instructions in the OT

'You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning. (Lev 19:13+)

And there will be no U-Haul trailers following these rich men's hearses. Their burial suits needs no pockets as there is nothing they will be allowed to place in them, because there is nothing they can take with them. Naked they came into the world and naked they will return, but they will hardly be blessing the Name of the LORD as Job did (cf Job 1:21)!

Ecclesiastes 5:15 As he had come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand.

If we have God in all things while they are ours, we shall have all things in God when they are taken away.

You actually possess everything you can see when you close your eyes.

Nothing influences a man so much as that which he calls his own. C. H. Spurgeon

That only is worth my having which I can have for ever. That only is worth my grasping which death cannot tear out of my hand. C. H. Spurgeon

The real value of a thing is the price it will bring in eternity. John Wesley

**Hiebert** - As believers we realize the transitoriness and perishableness of all that this world gives. It is an indisputable fact that "we brought nothing into the world." ...Since after a brief stay we shall go out as we came in, it is folly to be anxious and preoccupied with merely earthly things ([James Commentary](#))

**MacDonald** makes an interesting comment - In one of the most searching and piercing sections of his Letter, James now launches into a denunciation of the sins of the rich. The words fall like hammer-blows, blunt and unsparing. **In fact, the denunciation is so strong that these verses are seldom preached on.** James is here seen in the role of a prophet of social justice. He cries out against the failure of the rich to use their money for the alleviation of human need. He condemns those who have become rich by exploiting their workers. He rebukes their use of wealth for self-indulgence and luxurious living. Finally, he pictures the rich as arrogant oppressors of the righteous. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**Don Anderson** - James has been talking in chapter 4 about how TEMPORARY LIFE IS and how wrong it is to live life without God. Now in chapter 5 he is talking about WEALTH and how (I'EMPORARY it is and how wrong it is to use it without God. ([Notes](#))

**Randy Alcorn** - When earth becomes our heaven --when we see God's blessings as being primarily immediate and temporal -- we lose sight of who we are, why we are here, and what awaits us beyond the horizons of this world. (Money, Possessions, Eternity)

**Bruce Barton**, et al - After taking a deep breath, James turns his attention to the rich. They have been hovering in the background throughout this letter. Chapter 1 included the challenge to see that humble circumstances have distinct spiritual benefits (see 1:9-11) as opposed to riches, which require humility. In chapter 2, James warned about the destructiveness of preferential treatment based on wealth. At the end of chapter 4, James warned against being seduced by the world. He begins chapter 5 by warning wealthy non-Christians of their hopeless end and the worthlessness of their riches. Their wealth will not save them from God's judgment. (Life Application Bible Commentary – James)

**Joel Gregory** - Nothing in the Bible exceeds its vehemence against those who live for material prosperity alone. Some contemporary popular "health and wealth" theology casually joins Christianity with a voracious materialism. Under the slogan "name it and claim it," this superficial materialism promises Christians anything they may want. From James 5:1-6, one can guess James's attitude toward such perversion of Christian values. The godless rich receive only an ominous warning. Before an airliner makes a crash landing, the passengers are told to **brace themselves** for the inevitable impact. In James 5:1, James did the same for the insensitive materialists: **"Brace yourselves;** judgment is coming." The "rich" whom James addressed appear to have been non-Christians. Unlike the people who were addressed in 4:1-10, verse 1 has no call to repentance, no hope of salvation. (James: Faith Works!)

This instruction to the **rich** reminds one of Paul's warning in First Timothy 6 although the difference in Paul's letter was that the

warning was given to believing rich not wicked wealthy as in James...

But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. (cf **WEEP AND HOWL** here in James) 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.... 17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. (1Ti 6:9,10, 17-19)

**Mayor** says, "It is not the careless worldliness of the bustling trader (James 4:13-17+) which is condemned, but the more deadly worldliness of the unjust capitalist or landlord."

**Hiebert** - In this two-part section James exposes further manifestations of worldliness. In the first part (James 5:1-6), James utters a stinging denunciation of the cruelty and oppression of the world, while the second part (James 5:7-11) aims at safeguarding believers against a worldly reaction to such experiences of injustice. The two parts stand in remarkable contrast. "There is a most vigorous and fierce indictment in the first part, and nothing else; while in the second there is gentle and affectionate entreaty." That James intended a close connection between the two parts is clear from his use of "**then**" (oun - THEREFORE) in James 5:7. (James Commentary)

**Come now** - **NLT** has "Look here, you rich people!" This is an interjection, a word which is defined as "an abrupt emphatic exclamation expressing emotion." "A phrase to call solemn attention." (Jamieson)

James begins with this same interjection in James 4:13+

**Come now**, 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."

**Come** is in the present imperative a command calling for the reader to give continual attention to what follows. James says in effect "Now listen," which Hiebert says is "an arousing interjection implying disapproval, (and which) marks the transition to a new form of worldliness....The adverb **now** (nun) increases the sense of urgency." (cf 2 Cor 6:2) This was a common expression in everyday Greek but this is the only Biblical example. One writer calls it "the signal for an attack." Woe!

**James** was like the Old Testament prophets who boldly denounced the rich for oppressing the poor - Isa. 3:14-15; Isa 10:1-2; Amos 4:1; Mic. 2:1-2

**James** had given an earlier warning shot to **the rich** (which many commentators take to be believing rich in contrast to James 5:1-6) writing that...

The **rich man** is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. **For** (term of explanation) the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the **rich man** in the midst of his pursuits will fade away (THIS IS ONE REASON HE NEEDS TO WEEP AND HOWL! EVEN WHILE HE LOOKS SO SUCCESSFUL TO THE WORLD, HIS END WILL COME AND HE WILL SOON DEPART THIS WORLD!) (James 1:10-11<sup>+</sup>).

In chapter 2 James uses **rich** figuratively (cf believers in Smyrna - Rev 2:9<sup>+</sup>) and literally explains that poverty is a relative advantage when it comes to saving faith...

**Listen**, (SOMEWHAT LIKE "**Come now**" CALLING FOR THEM TO PAY SPECIAL HEED BUT IN A POSITIVE SENSE IN THIS CONTEXT) my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be **rich** in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not **the rich** who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? (James 2:5-6+)

**Jamieson** is probably correct when he says "James intends this address to rich Jewish unbelievers, **not so much for themselves, as for the saints**, that they may bear with patience (makrothumeo) the violence of the rich (Jas 5:7), knowing that God will speedily avenge them on their oppressors [Bengel]."

Jamieson's comment makes good sense because how many wicked rich are going to actually read James' somber warning? Probably not many! And if they did, they would probably scoff at it! But the suffering, poor believers will read it and realize that divine retribution is coming when Jesus will finally and forever make all things right. This truth would fortify their hearts to "**b e** (present imperative) steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor 15:58<sup>+</sup>)

**John Calvin's** comment is similar to Jamieson for he writes that James "has a regard to the faithful, that they, hearing of the miserable end of the rich, might not envy their fortune, and also that knowing that God would be the avenger of the wrongs they suffered, they might with a calm and resigned mind bear them."

**William Baker** - It was not unusual for Jews of the Second Temple period to regard *all* the rich as favored by God. The New Testament makes it clear, however, that wealth does not imply divine favor. (Twenty-First Century Biblical Commentary Series – The Books of James & First and Second Peter: Faith, Suffering, and Knowledge)

**Donald Burdick** - There is good reason to believe that the persons referred to in this section are not believers. It might be argued that they are personally addressed in the same way other groups are addressed in previous sections (James 3:1;4:13). Since the epistle in general is written to Christians, it might be assumed that the rich of James 5:1-6 are Christians just as the rich of James 1:9-11 are. However, there are significant differences between 5:1-6 and the rest of the epistle. These individuals are not addressed as "brothers" (cf. James 1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12). Furthermore, they are not called on to repent and change their ways but only to "weep and wail" because of the judgment they are going to undergo. (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**Kistemaker** - At the dawn of Christianity, rich people who possessed lands or homes sold them and gave the money to the poor (Acts 4:34-35+). For the recipients of the Epistle of James, wealth apparently consisted of foodstuffs, clothing, gold, and silver. (Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude)

**You rich** (rich man) (4145) **plousios** from **ploutos** = wealth, abundance, riches) is an adjective which describes that which exists in a large amount and is used most often in the NT in the sense of having abundant possessions and especially material wealth, a topic frequently addressed by the Lord Jesus. As we would say today in slang James is addressing this warning to those who are "loaded!" Even the sweet psalmist Asaph was perplexed and disturbed by the prosperity of the wicked in Psalm 73:1-16 (read Asaph's description which sounds a bit like James' description), **UNTIL** he "came into the sanctuary of God" for then he "perceived their end!" (Ps 73:17)

**MacArthur** says the rich were the "wicked wealthy who profess Christian faith and have associated themselves with the church, but whose real god is money." (MacArthur Study Bible)

#### THOUGHTS - THERE IS ONLY ONE LETTER DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOLD AND GOD!

Worldlings make gold their god; saints make God their gold. Matthew Henry

Many a man's gold has lost him his God. George Swinnock

The streets of gold do not have too great an appeal for those who pile up gold here on earth. A. W. Tozer

**James** sounds like his half-brother **Jesus** -

"But woe to you who are **rich**, for you are receiving your comfort in full." (Lk. 6:24+)

In His words to Laodicea, the last of the Seven Churches in Revelation, **Jesus** gave a similar pronouncement

'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. (Rev. 3:17-18+)

**Jesus** warned about the potential eternal spiritual poverty of riches...

And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a **rich man** to enter the kingdom of heaven. "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a **rich man** to enter the kingdom of God." (Mt 19:23-24)

**Weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you - Are coming upon** (see [eperchomai below](#)) is in the **present tense** which depicts these woes as already on their way! They will not be delayed and will arrive on time! So rich men, you are to prepare to meet your Maker! No wonder James gives such a striking command to **weep** ([aorist imperative](#)) in view of these certain, even imminent future miseries. The idea of weep is weep aloud, expressing uncontrollable, audible grief typically accompanied by wailing and sobbing, as when one suffers a traumatic personal loss or despair (like the death of a family member). Note specifically that misery is in the **plural** -- more than one thing will make the rich miserable! They will "need buckets for the tears when the crash comes upon" them. (Peterson) They will be ashamed and filled with remorse at how they had been such unfaithful stewards of God's riches and will wail over the many lost opportunities they had to do good! **Miseries** is an allusion to the final judgment of the wicked (see Eternal Punishment), not miseries in this life. This short temporal life is the rich man's "heaven," (as good as it will ever get), but for those they oppress this short life is their "hell" (as bad as it will ever get) so to speak. These future miseries stand in

stark contrast to the present oppression of the poor, for the former will be eternal, while the latter will only be temporal. One is reminded of the exhortation by Paul in Second Corinthians that...

**momentary**, light affliction is producing for us an **eternal** weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are **temporal**, but the things which are not seen are **eternal**. (2 Cor 4:17-18+)

**Howl** is in the [present tense](#), calling for this to be their continual practice every time they contemplate their future wretched state. Of course, as explained, they are unlikely to read this and continually howl. But the oppressed believers understand the intent is that if they did read and understand their future fate, they would be howling. And this truth would serve to encourage the oppressed believers to bear up, knowing that the end is in sight!

**Steven Cole** asks "Why would James spend six verses denouncing those who are outside of the church, who would never read this warning anyway? It's similar to when the Old Testament prophets pronounced woes on Israel's pagan enemies (see Isaiah 13-19). The warnings serve two main purposes. **First**, they should encourage us who know God to be faithful and endure, knowing that in due time He will judge the wicked. **Second**, it should warn us not to fall into any of the sins that will bring judgment on the wicked. In the case James is addressing, it is easy when you're poor and oppressed to think, "If I can just get rich, I will no longer have to deal with these problems!" So we can be tempted to pursue wealth, mistakenly thinking that happiness lies in getting rich....Because wealth can be a dangerous trap, we should be careful not to use it in an ungodly manner, but rather to be faithful. ([James 5:1-6 The Woes of Wealth Without God](#))

**Gregg Allen** adds "Christians suffering under such oppression would be tempted to despair, or to take vengeance, or to grow envious and bitter. And so, as a good pastoral counselor, James first points believers to the broad theme of this new section (5:1-11) - the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. He shows how fixing our minds and hopes on the return of the Lord sets us right. And then, he encourages the believer to be patient when oppressed and treated unjustly, because the coming of that same Lord Jesus Christ is near (v. 7). Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, will Himself make all things right in His perfect time; and our job is to be patient in our trust in Him, and to fearlessly and faithfully go on with His work until He comes." ([James 5:1-6 "The Howling of The Oppressor"](#))

James' call to **weep** and **howl** reminds one of similar OT outcries - Isa 13:6; Isa 14:31; Isa 15:3; Jer 4:8; Joel 1:5+, Joel 1:13+. So the audible weeping is accentuated by outbursts of howling. This presents quite a dramatic "auditory" picture!

**MacDonald** adds that the wicked rich "would mourn over their covetousness and selfishness. They would be convicted about their unfair employment practices. They would see the sin of seeking security in material things rather than in the Lord. And they would shed hot tears over the way they had indulged themselves to the full. James mentions four cardinal sins of the rich. The first is the sin of hoarding wealth." (Ibid)

**Robertson** - "Burst into weeping (ingressive aorist active imperative of *klaiō* as in James 4:9), howling with grief" (present active participle)."

**Weep** ([2799](#)) (***klaio***) means to mourn, to weep, to lament or to wail with emphasis upon the accompanying noise. The picture is of one lamenting with sobs or wailing aloud and was used to describe the wailing that took place when someone died, including actions of professional mourners (Mk 5:38, 39, Mk 16:10, Lk 8:52+, Jn 20:11; Jn 20:13; Jn 20:15, Acts 9:39+). Weeping was a sign of pain and grief as when Peter denied his Lord and he "remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and **wept** bitterly." (Mt 26:75, Lk 22:62+) One of the saddest descriptions of weeping is of our Lord Jesus for "When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and **wept** over it." (Lk. 19:41+)

**Ross** adds "The same word (***klaio***) is used in James 4:9+, but there the weeping is associated with repentance and the mourner has the prospect of having his tears wiped away by the God who deals graciously with the humble. There is no such prospect here; these heartless rich tyrants can expect only "miseries" and "the day of slaughter." (The Epistles of James and John)

**Jesus** contrasted the blessing of weeping now with the woe of weeping when this life is over

"Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who **weep** now, for you shall laugh. "Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep...."Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and **weep**. (Lk 6:21, 25+, cf Jn. 16:20 )

James warning to **weep and howl** are a foretaste of what the world will do when it realizes its "Babylon" has all come crashing down and they are forced to exchange their earthly joy for temporal and then eternal misery...

"And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and

lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning...11 "And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more....15 "The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning...19 "And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!" (Revelation 18:9, 11, 15, 19)

Jesus said that those who be excluded from His Kingdom would also be forever separated from His presence and the glory of His power (2 Th 1:8,9) and would experience **weeping and gnashing** ([brugmos](#), [bricho](#)) of teeth. Exactly what this image means may not be certain, but one can be certain and that is this image depicts a horrible, eternal experience:

Matthew 8:12 but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 22:13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Matthew 24:51 and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:30 "Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus addressed a similar "Woe" to the rich when He declared

"But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. (Lk 6:24) (My paraphrase - This is your "heaven!")

**Simon Kistemaker** writes "The term **wail** actually means "**howl**." It describes the sound a person utters when he suffers extraordinary pain or grief. What then is the difference between weeping in repentance and weeping without repentance? **John Calvin** observes, "Repentance has indeed its weeping, but being mixed with consolation, it does not proceed to howling." The life of luxury the rich have enjoyed is about to turn into a life filled with misery that includes suffering and "pain caused by physical diseases." (Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude)

**Howl** ([3649](#)) ([ololuzo](#)) is formed by [onomatopoeia](#) (sounds like howling) from the sound produced when one is crying aloud to the "gods" either in supplication or thanksgiving and resembles the sound of an ecstatic (exuberant) cry or shriek. It describes weeping accompanied by recurring shouts of pain. It was used in secular Greek especially of prayers and hymns of joy accompanied with shouts and shrieks uttered on festival days. Later it came to mean generally to cry aloud in joy or to shout. **Ololuzo** is also used in complaints meaning to shriek or howl as in the present context, for the rich have can have no expectation of joy in the future! For example, Isaiah writes "**Wail**, for the [day of the LORD](#) is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty." (Isa 13:6+, cf Isa 13:9-11)

A related word, [alalazo](#) is used in Mark 5:38 to describe mourners in the house of the synagogue official whose daughter had died; that there was a commotion, and that the people were not only loudly weeping but "loudly (polus = great magnitude) weeping ([klaio](#)) and **wailing** ([alalazo](#))".

**Ross** adds "James adds a second verb to intensify the utter wretchedness and hopelessness of the future of these men. This second verb, "howl ye," which occurs only here in N. T., is found in several passages in O. T., in close connection with the thought of imminent judgment; see Isa 13:6 (of Babylon), Isa. 15:3 (of Moab) and Isa. 23:1, 14 ("Howl, ye ships of Tarshish"). (The Epistles of James and John)

**Ololuzo** - 19v in the OT all in the prophets, especially Isaiah -

Isa. 10:10; Isa. 13:6; Isa. 14:31; Isa. 15:2; Isa. 15:3; Isa. 16:7; Isa. 23:1; Isa. 23:6; Isa. 23:14; Isa. 24:11; Isa. 52:5; Isa. 65:14; Jer. 2:23; Jer. 48:20; Jer. 48:31; Ezek. 21:12; Hos. 7:14; Amos 8:3; Zech. 11:2; Jas. 5:1

**Miseries** ([5004](#)) ([talaiporia](#)) is literally, a calloused (miserable) condition; wretchedness resulting from ongoing, intense affliction. It describes an emotional condition that arises in the present context from both inner or outer torment, and worst of all eternal torment! The **rich** are potentially destined for wretchedness, distress, trouble.

James uses the related verb [talaiporeo](#) in James 4:9+

**Be miserable** ([aorist imperative](#)) and **mourn** ([aorist imperative](#)) and **weep** ([aorist imperative](#)); let your laughter **be turned** ([aorist imperative](#)) into mourning and your joy to gloom.

There is an interesting twist for "In James 4:9+ his readers are commanded to make themselves miserable ([talaiporeo](#) - **Be miserable**) in all-out repentance. But here in James 5:1 the rich are told that God will send the **miseries** ([talaiporia](#)) of judgment upon them: (Burdick - Expositor's Bible Commentary)

Proverbs 28:20 A faithful man will abound with blessings, But he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished. (Read Luke 12:16-21+)

**Jamieson** on **are coming upon you** - unexpectedly and swiftly, namely, at the coming of the Lord (Jas 5:7); primarily, at the destruction of Jerusalem (**ED**: REFERRING TO 70 AD); finally, at His visible coming to judge the world.

**Courson** writes that "Because the language in James 5:7 makes it clear that he is addressing the true believer (**ED**: HE USED "BRETHREN" IN VERSE 7 BUT NOT IN VERSES 1-6), James' harsh words here in verse three are not directed to true brothers, but to those who were only playing church. They are directed to those who thought they would be saved in the last day because of their wealth. They are directed to those who were using their money to be esteemed highly in the church." (Jon Courson's Application Commentary New Testament)

Jamieson's comment reminds me of the return of the Stone (Christ) Who will crush all of the wealthy, godless kingdoms of this world and establish His [Messianic Kingdom](#) in which righteousness will dwell...

"You continued looking until a STONE (CHRIST AT HIS SECOND COMING - cf Rev 19:11-16+) was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth....44 "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever." (Da 2:34-35+, Da 2:44+) (See [Christ the Stone](#))

**Are coming upon** ([1904](#)) **eperchomai** from **epi** = upon + **erchomai** = come) means literally to come upon or over a person or place. To draw near which can refer to people, events or time as shown in the nine NT uses. To come upon in the sense of arriving (Acts 14:19). To come upon in the sense of something happening or occurring (Acts 8:24) Eperchomai is used by Luke twice to describe the Holy Spirit coming upon individuals (Mary Lk 1:35, apostles Acts 1:8). Luke 21:26 uses eperchomai in a prophetic sense of coming global and heavenly catastrophic events, which is a good parallel with the [catastrophe](#) coming upon the wicked rich! The rich man in hell who cried: "I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:24+) is a case in point!

**Lehman Strauss** - While it is true that a future judgment awaits the ungodly, James might have been referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, predicted by our Lord (Mt 24:1, 2), and fulfilled only a few years after the Apostle wrote his Epistle (**ED**: JAMES WRITTEN 45-50 AD, JERUSALEM DESTROYED 70 AD). Although the rich were killed and robbed of their possessions when Jerusalem was destroyed, the prophecy of James was not to have its complete fulfillment then. The miseries that were to come to pass were to extend to the "last days" (James 5:3), even "unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7). (James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James)

**THOUGHT** - There is solemn teaching here for every Christian, seeing the miserable end of the godless, covetous rich, that he should never covet riches nor unwisely use that which he has come by honestly. (Lehman Strauss)

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Would you like to be rich? Very few would say, "Nah, it doesn't interest me!" One wise guy said, "They say it's better to be poor and happy than rich and miserable. But couldn't something be worked out, such as being moderately wealthy and just a little moody?" (In Reader's Digest, 9/82.)....The best sermon I've read on the problems of wealth was not a sermon, but a novel. It was not written by a Christian author, but by the famous writer, John Steinbeck. It is called *The Pearl* [Bantam Books]. It's the story of a poor pearl diver who dreams of finding the perfect pearl. One day he actually finds it. The rest of the story unfolds how his once tranquil life turns into a growing nightmare as everyone else desperately tries to take his treasure from him. Every Christian would benefit from reading this powerful story!...Money is like a loaded gun: it can be extremely useful in certain situations, but you've got to use it carefully, or you may hurt others and yourself. Or, to use another analogy, money is like fire. Used properly and under control, fire is a helpful tool. But if it is used carelessly or with evil intent, it can become a powerful force that destroys both property and life. When combined with the fallen, greedy, selfish human heart, money can quickly corrupt. That's why Jesus said (Mt 19:23-24), after the rich young ruler walked away from salvation, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." The disciples were astonished and said (Mat 19:25), "Then who can be saved?" Jesus replied (Mat 19:26), "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." In other words, it takes nothing less than the power of God to save us from the

dangers of greed and selfishness that are bound up with wealth..(Steven Cole)

**ED:** Cole's illustration reminds me of some of the stories of those who won mega lotteries - [Read the tragic stories of 20 lottery winners.](#)

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**Steven J Lawson** (Read Luke 18:18-27+) - Jesus saw through the outer facade into his heart. To the greed. To the materialism. To the worldliness. To the self-centeredness. What Jesus saw was a bankrupt heart. Empty and void. With the skill of a deft surgeon, Jesus cuts to the real issue of this man's heart: "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." No, Jesus was not saying he must buy his way to Heaven. This man's problem was that money and power had become his master. His god. His life pursuit. Jesus was saying, "You must change ships in midstream and follow a new Master. I must become your new Number One. Reassign your life and all your possessions under My authority." Or it's no deal. This rich yuppie first looked at his money. Then at Christ. Back to his money. Then back to Christ. Which would it be? It was a moment of decision. Who would be his God? Money or the Master? The decision was cast. And money and power won. This young exec turned on his heels and vanished, leaving sad and grieved. His face fell, dejected. Why? Because he could not have it both ways. His money was too much to give up. Jesus watched him as he faded into the horizon and turned to His disciples saying, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" (Luke 18:24). Yes, it is hard for the rich to be saved. Hard because they have more "things" to forsake. Hard because they have to stand in line like everyone else and receive a free gift. Hard because they are more tied to this world. Hard because it is hard to forfeit power and control. How hard? "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," Jesus said. Now, that is hard. Hard, as in impossible. Camels don't fit through sewing needles. Unless it is in the movie Honey, I Shrunk the Camel. It is impossible for anyone to be saved who wants to keep control of his life and money. Impossible. I-M-P-0-S-S-I-B-L-E! (from **Men Who Win: Pursuing the Ultimate Prize**)

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#### OPPRESSING THE HIRELING JAMES 5:1–11 - James Smith

Evidently many of the poor amongst the Christian Jews were oppressed by the wealthy, and defrauded of their hard earnings (verse 4). Faith in Christ and His Coming will lead us to a patient sufferance of evils we cannot avoid. "The Just One" is R.V. of verse 6. "Murdered the Righteous One" is Rotherham's rendering.

#### THE LABOURER'S:

I. Hire. "Kept back by fraud" (4). Observe—"Crieth." What a striking phrase. Crieth with a voice God can hear.

II. Patience (7, 8, 10, 11). James turns from the oppressors to the oppressed. "Suffer with long patience" is the marginal note. This is wise advice. For agitation sometimes is futile.

III. Hope. But why be patient? How long should patience be exercised? The defrauded labourer who cannot find immediate redress by man, must remember the future Advent of our Lord when all wrongs will be righted. Read in the prophecies of the Old Testament the glowing results of Messiah's reign. Our great hope is the Coming of the Lord. That Coming "draweth nigh." That was true in those days—how much more so in our day. There are impatient folk who desire immediate redress of all wrongs, and who object to the advice here given. This is the ideal, not immediately realizable. What then? Should not patience be allowed to operate until wrongs are swept away. And who will sweep these things off the face of the earth? Man has done his best and failed. Ah, there is one—the Man, Christ Jesus. "He, the Judge, standeth before the door" (verse 9). In the meantime, let us who cherish ardently this hope be patient, and reveal our patience in—

IV. Silence. That is taught in verse 9. "Grudge not one against another," is, in the margin, "Groan not one against another," or, as J.N.D., "Complain not one against another," or as Rotherham, "Be not sighing one against another." Surely this means that, counting on the Coming of the One Who will sweep away all abuses and punish the oppressors, we shall cease to complain to one another, or of one another, ceasing to be constantly "dinning" into other people's ears the story of our grievance. Groaning will give place to glorying—glorying in the Lord. Silent to man on our grievances because not silent to the Lord.

V. Prayer (13). Ah, here is the great result of uncomplaining—we pour out into the ears of our loving God our sorrows, and the wrongs inflicted upon us.

**James 5:2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.**

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NET James 5:2 Your riches have rotted and your clothing has become moth-eaten.

GNT James 5:2 πλο τος μ ν σ σηπεν κα τ μ τια μ ν σηη βρωτα γ γονεν,

NLT James 5:2 Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags.

KJV James 5:2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

ESV James 5:2 Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten.

ASV James 5:2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

CSB James 5:2 Your wealth is ruined and your clothes are moth-eaten.

NIV James 5:2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes.

NKJ James 5:2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

NRS James 5:2 Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten.

YLT James 5:2 your riches have rotted, and your garments have become moth-eaten;

NAB James 5:2 Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become moth-eaten,

NJB James 5:2 Your wealth is rotting, your clothes are all moth-eaten.

GWN James 5:2 Your riches have decayed, and your clothes have been eaten by moths.

BBE James 5:2 Your wealth is unclean and insects have made holes in your clothing.

- **Your riches have rotted:** Jer 17:11 Mt 6:19,20 Lu 12:33 1Pe 1:4
- **your garments have become moth-eaten** Jas 2:2 Job 13:28 Ps 39:11 Isa 50:9 51:8 Ho 5:12
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## RICHES ROT AND RUIN!

**Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten - Rotted** is the [perfect tense](#) signifying their riches would at some point reach a state of rot (and uselessness) and that state would persist permanently. **Become** (moth-eaten) is also in the [perfect tense](#) speaking of permanence. I am reminded of the quip that you don't see any U-Haul trailers (bringing along all the treasures and garments) following a funeral hearse! It is absolutely true that "You can't take it with you!" You can only send your investments on ahead to Heaven (study Mt 6:19-21+)! It is absolutely foolish the bumper sticker I saw on a big Mercedes "He who dies with the most toys wins!" Talk about self-deception. When a person is deceived by definition they do not even know they are deceived! We ALL need to hear and heed Jesus words

And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness ([apate](#)) of **wealth** ([ploutos](#)) - same word James uses; also used of "riches" in Lk 8:14+) choke (suffocate, strangle completely) the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 23 "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty (THIS FRUIT IS SENT ON AHEAD IN OBEDIENCE TO JESUS' COMMAND IN Mt 6:20+) (Mt 13:22-23)

"WEALTH " at best, is only TEMPORARY and a part of this world. -- Therefore, our SECURITY should not rest in our wealth.

A comedian once said "If money talks, all it ever says to me is goodbye!" Even comedians can be Biblical!

Jesus clearly warned about the transient and corruptible nature of earthly treasures, commanding His hearers...

**"Do not store up (present imperative with a negative)** = stop doing this, implying they were doing this) for yourselves treasures on earth, where **moth and rust destroy** ([aphanizo](#) - used in Jas 4:14+ of our lives!), and where thieves break in and steal. (Mt 6:19+)

**Riches** (wealth) ([4149](#)) ([ploutos](#) from **pletho** = to fill) properly denotes abundance, plentitude, and literally is used to refer to material wealth or prosperity (abundance of earthly, temporal goods) which is the meaning in the parable of the seed and the soils (Mt 13:22, Mk 4:19, Lk 8:14 = Material riches are deceitful and choke out reception of the Word of God. Be careful all you wealthy readers! Contrast spiritual riches - Ep 3:8) Indeed, think of the people who know whose whole lives glow with the glory of God for they are rich in spiritual possessions, albeit often poor in material possessions! In Greek **Plutus** was the god of riches. Liddell-Scott records secular uses of ploutos as referring to treasures of gold, silver, the "riches" of the earth. Our English word **plutocrat** means

one who rules because of his wealth. In Greek the word is connected to pleroma, the word for "fullness" so that a rich person is one who is "full of money or property." The **riches** of this world do not compare with "the unfathomable **riches** ([ploutos](#)) of Christ" (Eph 3:8±), "the **riches** ([ploutos](#)) of His glory" (Eph 3:16±, Php 4:19±) and the "**riches** ([ploutos](#)) of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col 1:27±) The prayer I frequently pray for myself and others is...

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the **riches** ([ploutos](#)) of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might (Eph 1:18-19±)

We all need to have the attitude of Moses who had access to the treasures of Egypt but who considered "the reproach ([oneidismos](#)) of Christ greater **riches** ([ploutos](#)) than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward (AGAIN WE SEE THE WISE MAN SENDS HIS INVESTMENT/TREASURES ON AHEAD TO HEAVEN)." (Heb 11:26±)

**Steven Cole** - What good are silos full of grain if, when you go to get a bag full, it's spoiled or full of mold? What good are ten changes of clothes if, when you go to get something out of the closet, it's moth-eaten? What good is a bank vault full of jewels if you're afraid to wear them for fear of being robbed? ([James 5:1-6 The Woes of Wealth Without God](#))

**ESV Study Bible** has an interesting, pithy note - Riches, garments, and gold sum up the sumptuous, materialistic lifestyle of these landowners. These things will not only be lost forever but will be evidence at their final trial before God and will feed the very flames of the lake of fire (**ED**: FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING THAT MAY INDEED BE THE CASE FOR GREATER , where they will spend eternity (Rev 20:11-15±).

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones** - Clothing—oh, the time and the energy and the enthusiasm that goes into this. The talking and the writing; again you see it shouting at you everywhere. But you get it equally with certain people in the matter of their house and home. The lust of the eyes—how pathetic it is that human beings, endowed with the faculties that God has given, can live for things like that, this outlook of pomp and appearance and show. (Walking with God, 86–87)

**Rotted** ([4595](#)) (**sepo** related to [sapros](#) - rotten) is found only here in the NT and means their riches have been made corrupt, rotten, even putrid. Liddell-Scott adds that **sepo** is used of dead bodies that have begun to rot, the mortification of live flesh, and of water or food that is rejected after digestion! Woe! No wonder they will weep and howl (James 5:1)! In classical literature [Aeschylus](#) used **sepo** to refer to the festering action caused by a serpent's poison. Wow! Is this not a word picture of the danger of one "bitten" by the snake called "love of money!" **Sepo** is used in the Septuagint of Ps 38:5 "My wounds grow foul and **feaster** (Lxx = **sepo**) Because of my folly."

**Sepo** - 6x in the Septuagint - Job 16:7; Job 19:20; Job 33:21; Job 40:12; Ps. 38:5; Ezek. 17:9

**Garments** (cloaks) ([2440](#)) (**himation**) describes a garment of any sort, but especially an outer garment and in the plural (ta himatia) for clothes in general. In contrast the Greek word [chiton](#) refers to the garment worn under the outer cloak. The **himation** was something thrown over the inner tunic (chiton) and in secular Greek was sometimes used for the Roman toga. **Garments** were a prominent form of wealth in the ancient world. One is reminded of Herod's **royal apparel** and how it was associated with him rotting (see Acts 12:21-23+).

**Moth-eaten** ([4598](#)) (**setobrotos** from **ses** = moth + **bibrosko** = to eat) means that which is damaged by the larvae of moths. Moth eaten. Ruined by moths. It is found only one time in secular Greek literature, in the Sybilline Oracles. There it describes wooden idols that have been damaged or destroyed by moths. There is only one use in the Septuagint - "While I am decaying like a rotten thing, Like a garment that is **moth-eaten.**" (Job 13:28)

**THOUGHT** - What good is there in having a fine suit with the plague in it? John Trapp

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**Illustration** - When Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 A. D., that modern Sodom suffered a fiery deluge of flames and molten ash and there were those who, unable to tear themselves free from the things which were to them, dearer than life, turned back. Some 2,000 lost their lives; among them a woman who loved fine jewelry above all else. As the deadly rain of fire came down, she decided to run to the harbor and escape by ship. That was wise, but this rich and beautiful woman stayed behind just long enough to collect as much jewelry as she could carry. Snatching up the rings, she hastily thrust them on her fingers. There was no time to hunt for a box or a bag in which to cram her ornaments, so she picked up as many as she could hold, and rushed into the street, clutching her pearls and diamonds, her rubies and sapphires, her gold brooches and her earrings—a wealth of finery that would be placed at thousands of dollars today. But she delayed too long. The poisonous fumes overcame her as she ran; and with all her trinkets she stumbled, fell, and died, clutching the things she prized so much. There under the ashes of Pompeii she lay; and when the excavators found her, she was still lovely, and her hands were still laden with jewels.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Years ago, Newsweek (6/21/82) reported a new service that was being offered to the rich. Since bank safe deposit boxes were hard to get and were only available during banking hours, many stores had sprung up to meet the demand. It mentioned one in New Orleans that was housed in the former Federal Reserve Bank building. (I wonder how it fared in Hurricane Katrina?) These stores were often open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so that clients could access their jewels and treasures at any time. One company offered mirrored privacy booths where customers could inspect their precious possessions, all for \$2,700 annual rent for a one by three-foot box (that was a lot more in 1982!). (Steven Cole)

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Perhaps we should say aloud, over and over, the words of the song: "This world is not my home." Once again, C. S. Lewis put it well: "Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home. " (Randy Alcorn)

**Play Ricky Skaggs catchy tune...**

[This world is not my home I'm just a passing through](#)

My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue  
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door  
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore  
Oh lord you know I have no friend like you  
If heaven's not my home then lord what will I do  
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door  
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore

(Is this the song in your heart?)

**James 5:3 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!**

NET James 5:3 Your gold and silver have rusted and their rust will be a witness against you. It will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have hoarded treasure!

GNT James 5:3 χρυσός μὲν καὶ ρυγυρός κατώτατοι καὶ οἱ ατνές εἰς μαρτύριον μὲν στατοί καὶ φεγγώται τὸ στροφός μὲν τοῦ περιβόλου. Θησαυρούσατε δὲ στοχαστικά μὲν τοῖς μαρτυρίαις.

NLT James 5:3 Your gold and silver have become worthless. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This treasure you have accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the day of judgment.

KJV James 5:3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

ESV James 5:3 Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.

ASV James 5:3 Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days.

CSB James 5:3 Your silver and gold are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You stored up treasure in the last days!

NIV James 5:3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.

NKJ James 5:3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

NRS James 5:3 Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days.

YLT James 5:3 your gold and silver have rotted, and the rust of them for a testimony shall be to you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye made treasure in the last days!

NAB James 5:3 your gold and silver have corroded, and that corrosion will be a testimony against you; it will

devour your flesh like a fire. You have stored up treasure for the last days.

NJB James 5:3 All your gold and your silver are corroding away, and the same corrosion will be a witness against you and eat into your body. It is like a fire which you have stored up for the final days.

GWN James 5:3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be used as evidence against you. Like fire, it will destroy your body. You have stored up riches in these last days.

BBE James 5:3 Your gold and your silver are wasted and their waste will be a witness against you, burning into your flesh. You have put by your store in the last days.

- **Your gold and your silver have rusted:** 2Ti 2:17
- **their rust will be a witness against you** Ge 31:48,52 Jos 24:27 Job 16:8
- **will consume your flesh like fire** Jer 19:9 Mic 3:3 Rev 17:16 20:15 21:8
- **you have stored up your treasure:** De 32:33,34 Job 14:16,17 Ro 2:5
- **It is in the last days:** Ge 49:1 Isa 2:2 Mic 4:1 Ac 2:17 2Pe 3:3
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **EARTHLY TREASURES WILL RUST**

**Your gold and your silver have rusted** - **Gold** in its pure .999 fine form is one of only two other known metals (platinum and chromium) which are impervious to corrosion. So the point **rusted** gold and silver figuratively depicts their utter worthlessness (as if they were rusted and useless). In a word wealth is only temporary.

**HCSB Study Bible** adds that "Technically speaking, **gold** and **silver** do not corrode. James's statement about them corroding is paradoxical, emphasizing that even "incorruptible" commodities are destined to perish"

**Steven Cole** - James is forcefully making the point that wealth is temporary and that judgment and eternity are ahead. So to pursue wealth to the neglect of pursuing God or to trust in wealth as the solution to your deepest needs is sheer folly! As Jesus pointedly said, the Mammon of unrighteousness will fail (Lu 16:9). Therefore, we must use it wisely in light of the reality of eternity. ...In James' times, there were three main indicators of wealth. James uses three terms to point to the temporary nature of each. First, there was grain. You could store it in large bins or silos. But James says of it (Ja 5:2), "Your riches have rotted." Second, there was clothing. In a world where most of the poor only had the clothes on their backs, it was a sign of wealth to have more than one change of clothes (see Ge 45:22; Jos 7:21; Jdg 14:12; 2Ki 5:5, 2Ki 5:22). The apostle Paul could claim that he had coveted no one's money or clothes (Ac 20:33). James echoes Jesus, who warned that clothes are subject to the ruin of moths (Mt 6:19). Third, there were gold and silver. James knew, of course, that these metals are not subject to literal rust. But he is using irony to make a point. When God brings judgment, even these precious metals will be doomed to corruption. What good were all the gold and silver in the world in A.D. 70 when Titus destroyed Jerusalem and slaughtered a million Jews? ([James 5:1-6 The Woes of Wealth Without God](#))

**And their rust will be a witness against you**- Treasures are personified as witnesses who will take the stand to testify against those who have hoarded the treasures and do so unjustly! I can't imagine the testimonies by the witnesses when [Bernie Madoff](#) stands before the Righteous Judge Jesus at the [Great White Throne Judgment](#) (unless he comes to faith in that Judge before he dies - which I pray he does)!

**Swindoll** comments "In those days, a person could display his or her wealth in three ways: by feasting lavishly, by dressing extravagantly, and by spending wildly. (Some things never change!) James targets these three areas of the flamboyant lifestyle of the rich, pointing out how foolish it is to center their lives on these things. Through time and disuse, food goes bad, garments get eaten by moths, and precious metals tarnish. By hoarding rather than sharing, the wealth of the rich rots and rusts." (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – James, 1 & 2 Peter)

**Rusted** ([2447](#)) (**ios** from **híemi** = to send) is something sent out and one Greek meaning is thus arrow, a meaning not found in the NT. **ios** is used in the NT to mean **poison** or **venom**. The idea is something that is emitted since venom is ejected or emitted from a serpent's fangs. **ios** also means **rust** as if emitted by metals. **ios** is used 3 times in the NT (twice in James and once in Ro 3:13) and 7 times in the (Ps 14:3; 140:3; Pr 23:32; Lam 3:13; Ezek 24:6, 11, 12)

**James** uses **ios** with both meanings (poison and rust) and in

James 3:8 (Describing the **Tongue** James says that) "no one (Greek = absolutely no one. Have you ever tried?) can (dunamai = have power by virtue of inherent ability and resources) tame (reduce to stillness or quietness) the tongue; it is a restless (Unsettled, unsteady, unstable, staggering, reeling like a drunken man.

Not having stability) evil and full of (replete, stuffed) deadly (literally death bringing) **poison** (ios). ([James 3:8](#))

**(Comment:** The tongue of an unregenerate man or even of a believer not controlled by the Spirit is like a deadly poisonous snake. The venomous evil chafes at confinement, always seeking a way to escape and to spread its deadly poison. This "poison" is more deadly than a snake's because it can destroy morally, socially, economically, and spiritually.)

**Witness** (3142) ([marturion](#)) source of English "[martyr](#)" means evidence, proof. The content of what a witness tells. Marturion is the declaration of facts which confirms or makes something known. Marturion is an objective act, circumstance or statement that provides evidence or certifies the truthfulness of something. The content of what is witnessed or said. (See also [marturia/martyria](#)) **Testimony** (marturion) means just that—a testimony or witness. A person can only testify to what he himself has seen or heard or experienced. A witness in a courtroom is to report only what he knows objectively, factually, and personally. He is not to speculate, guess, or deduce. **Testimony** is a solemn attestation as to the truth of a matter, a declaration of truth or fact. **Testimony** is proof or demonstration of some fact, evidence, piece of evidence.

In this section it is fascinating that God will call several witnesses to testify against the wicked rich on judgment day - (1) Their wealth (Jas 5:3), (2) Wages withheld ("cries out" - Jas 5:4a = "Money talks!"); (3) Workers defrauded ("the outcry of those who did the harvesting" - Jas 5:4b) And there will be no bribing the Righteous Judge Jesus!

**And will consume your flesh like fire** - NLT paraphrases it "The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire." What a horrible picture this presents of destroying one's flesh! This is not [annihilation](#) for all souls will reside somewhere, either Heaven or Hell.

**Wiersbe** sees **consume your flesh like fire** as a present judgment of the wicked wealthy on earth because "misused riches erode character....Of itself, money is not sinful; it is neutral. But "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). "Thou shalt not covet" is the last of the Ten Commandments, but it is the most dangerous. Covetousness will make a person break all the other nine commandments. Abraham was a rich man, but he maintained his faith and character. When Lot became rich, it ruined his character and ultimately ruined his family. It is good to have riches in your hand provided they do not get into your heart. "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them" (Ps. 62:10). "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold" (Prov. 22:1). (Bible Exposition Commentary)

**Will consume** (2068) ([esthio](#)) literally means to eat, take something in through the mouth (Mt 15:32; Mk 2:26; 7:28; Lk 22:30; Ac 10:14; Ro 14:2; 1 Cor 10:25, 27; 2 Th 3:12; Rv 19:18); Esthio is often used in parallelism with pino (drink) (Matt 6:25, 31; 11:18, 19; 24:49; 26:26; Mark 2:16; Luke 5:30, 33; 7:33, 34; 10:7; 12:19, 29, 45; 13:26; 17:8, 27, 28; 22:30; John 6:53; Acts 9:9; 23:12, 21; 1 Cor 9:4; 10:7, 31; 11:22, 26, 27, 28, 29; 15:32; Rom 14:21). to have a meal, eat bread or food (Mark 3:20; 7:5; Mt 15:2; Luke 7:33; 14:1, 5; Jn 6:23; 1 Cor 11:26f.; 2 Th 3:8, 12) Meta (with) is used of eating with others (e.g. Mark 14:14; Luke 22:11; i Mark 14:18; Luke 7:36); idiomatically (1) literally eat one's own bread, i.e. earn a living (2 Th 3:12); (2) figuratively; (a) to do away with completely, consume, devour (of fire II. 23, 182; Isa 10:17; 26:11), destroy, with the implication of doing away with all traces of an object, destroy as if by rust or fire (James 5:3, Heb 10:27) In the OT, to eat is often applied to the action of fire,; (b) metaphorically, as taking spiritual nourishment eat, partake of (Jn 6:53)

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek esthiō, as well as phagō (which provides certain missing tenses), denoted the process of eating in order to sustain life. When combined with the verb pinō (3956), "drink," a stock expression is generated ("eating and drinking") which carries with it the notion of fellowship or participation. This association with fellowship is also found in the Old Testament. David complained (Psalm 41:9 [LXX 40:9]) that his "familiar friend . . . which did eat" (ho esthiōn artous mou) of David's food had rebelled against him. Eating could also have a religious significance for the Greek. Certain types of worship, particularly in the "mystery religions," were involved with eating and drinking. The "peace (fellowship) offering" (Leviticus 3) is an expression of eating as a worship function in the Old Testament, as were the laws concerning "permitted" foods (Leviticus 11). Eating and drinking were always construed by the Jews as emblematic of the blessings of God to be enjoyed with thanksgiving (Ecclesiastes 2:24,25 and throughout the book). But, from the foundation of the world, sin has involved man's abuse of something originally good. So drunkenness and gluttony were regarded as sinful debauchery. **In the New Testament** Jesus defended himself against such a charge (Matthew 11:18,19) by replying that John the Baptist failed to eat or drink, and they charged him with having a demon. But when Jesus ate and drank, they accused Him of being a glutton and a drunkard (cf. Luke 7:33,34). The notion of fellowship is clearly conveyed when Jesus spoke of the reprobate servant who began "to eat and drink with the drunken" (Matthew 24:49; cf. Luke 12:45). It also lies at the root of the accusation that Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9:11; cf. Luke 15:1,2, sunesthiō [4756], "eats with"). Participation is implied in Revelation 2:7, where "to eat of the tree of life" (cf. Genesis 2:9; Revelation 22:2,14) clearly indicates sharing in that life. In John 6:48-58 Jesus declared that it is necessary to eat His flesh and drink His blood (6:53) to have life. Jesus said he who does this "dwelleth in me, and I in him" (6:56). Paul's attitude toward meats offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8) is better understood if one views eating as a worship function. Those who are "strong" see it only as a natural function. But Paul wrote that the "strong" must consider the "weaker brother" who, before his conversion, viewed eating these

sacrifices as a form of idol worship, and it still offended him. Eating as a legitimate form of worship to God is seen in the eating of the Passover (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-28), which became the Lord's Supper for the Church (1 Corinthians 11:23-34). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Esthio** - 139v - ate(21), consume(2), diet(1), dine(1), does so(1), eat(96), eaten(2), eating(19), eats(11), feed(2), use(1). concentrated in Matthew (24 occurrences), Mark (27), Luke (33), John (15), Acts (7), Romans (13, all in ch. 14), 1 Corinthians (27, most in chs. 8-11), and Revelation (6).

Matt. 6:25; Matt. 6:31; Matt. 9:11; Matt. 11:18; Matt. 11:19; Matt. 12:1; Matt. 12:4; Matt. 14:16; Matt. 14:20; Matt. 14:21; Matt. 15:2; Matt. 15:20; Matt. 15:27; Matt. 15:32; Matt. 15:37; Matt. 15:38; Matt. 24:49; Matt. 25:35; Matt. 25:42; Matt. 26:17; Matt. 26:21; Matt. 26:26; Mk. 1:6; Mk. 2:16; Mk. 2:26; Mk. 3:20; Mk. 5:43; Mk. 6:31; Mk. 6:36; Mk. 6:37; Mk. 6:42; Mk. 6:44; Mk. 7:2; Mk. 7:3; Mk. 7:4; Mk. 7:5; Mk. 7:28; Mk. 8:1; Mk. 8:2; Mk. 8:8; Mk. 11:14; Mk. 14:12; Mk. 14:14; Mk. 14:18; Mk. 14:22; Lk. 4:2; Lk. 5:30; Lk. 5:33; Lk. 6:1; Lk. 6:4; Lk. 7:33; Lk. 7:34; Lk. 7:36; Lk. 8:55; Lk. 9:13; Lk. 9:17; Lk. 10:7; Lk. 10:8; Lk. 12:19; Lk. 12:22; Lk. 12:29; Lk. 12:45; Lk. 13:26; Lk. 14:1; Lk. 14:15; Lk. 15:16; Lk. 15:23; Lk. 17:8; Lk. 17:27; Lk. 17:28; Lk. 22:8; Lk. 22:11; Lk. 22:15; Lk. 22:16; Lk. 22:30; Lk. 24:43; Jn. 4:31; Jn. 4:32; Jn. 4:33; Jn. 6:5; Jn. 6:23; Jn. 6:26; Jn. 6:31; Jn. 6:49; Jn. 6:50; Jn. 6:51; Jn. 6:52; Jn. 6:53; Jn. 6:58; Jn. 18:28; Acts 9:9; Acts 10:13; Acts 10:14; Acts 11:7; Acts 23:12; Acts 23:21; Acts 27:35; Rom. 14:2; Rom. 14:3; Rom. 14:6; Rom. 14:20; Rom. 14:21; Rom. 14:23; 1 Co. 8:7; 1 Co. 8:8; 1 Co. 8:10; 1 Co. 8:13; 1 Co. 9:4; 1 Co. 9:7; 1 Co. 9:13; 1 Co. 10:3; 1 Co. 10:7; 1 Co. 10:18; 1 Co. 10:25; 1 Co. 10:27; 1 Co. 10:28; 1 Co. 10:31; 1 Co. 11:20; 1 Co. 11:21; 1 Co. 11:22; 1 Co. 11:26; 1 Co. 11:27; 1 Co. 11:28; 1 Co. 11:29; 1 Co. 11:33; 1 Co. 11:34; 1 Co. 15:32; 2 Thess. 3:8; 2 Thess. 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:12; Heb. 10:27; Heb. 13:10; Jas. 5:3; Rev. 2:7; Rev. 2:14; Rev. 2:20; Rev. 10:10; Rev. 17:16; Rev. 19:18

**Esthio** - over 600 verses so only Genesis is listed below -

Gen. 2:16; Gen. 2:17; Gen. 3:1; Gen. 3:2; Gen. 3:3; Gen. 3:5; Gen. 3:6; Gen. 3:11; Gen. 3:12; Gen. 3:13; Gen. 3:14; Gen. 3:17; Gen. 3:18; Gen. 3:19; Gen. 3:22; Gen. 6:21; Gen. 9:4; Gen. 14:24; Gen. 18:5; Gen. 18:8; Gen. 19:3; Gen. 24:33; Gen. 24:54; Gen. 25:34; Gen. 26:30; Gen. 27:4; Gen. 27:7; Gen. 27:10; Gen. 27:19; Gen. 27:25; Gen. 27:31; Gen. 27:33; Gen. 28:20; Gen. 31:46; Gen. 31:54; Gen. 32:33; Gen. 37:25; Gen. 39:6; Gen. 40:17; Gen. 40:19; Gen. 43:16; Gen. 45:18; Gen. 47:22; Gen. 49:27;

**Flesh** ([4561](#)) ([sarx](#)) is used 147 times in the NT and has many nuances (e.g., some lexicons list up to 11 definitions!). In this context sarx refers to literal flesh (as in Lk 24:39; J 6:51–56; Ro 2:28; 1 Cor 15:39; 2 Cor 12:7; Gal 6:13; Js 5:3; Rev 19:18, 21)

**J Vernon McGee** has a simple classification for **sarx** writing that "it can be used in three different ways. It can speak of the body, the physical body that we have, the meat that is on the bones. It can speak of weakness, meaning that which is psychological. It can also mean that corrupt nature which you and I have, that fallen nature. That is the spiritual meaning. So this word can be used in a physical sense, in a psychological sense, and in a spiritual sense. Paul uses the word flesh in all three senses but more frequently in the sense of the old Adamic, fallen nature. ([Thru the Bible Commentary](#))

**Jesus** frequently warned of the dangers of wealth as in Luke 12

Then He said to them, 'Beware, and be on your guard (both are [present imperative](#) calling for a lifestyle!) against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.' 16 And He told them a parable, saying, 'The land of a rich man was very productive. 17 "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 18 "Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19' And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' 21 "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Lk 12:15-21+)

## TREASURE HOARDERS REAP A HORRIBLE HARVEST!

**It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure**- The key time phrase is the last days and is discussed below. It is an eschatological (prophetic) phrase and it will terminate with the return of Christ. And if He is not one's Treasure, then all they have stored up forever will perish. Stated another way, all treasure outside of Jesus Christ is empty, vain, worthless and will vanish forever

when He returns! The proverb is true that "For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens." (Pr 23:5) But sadly not toward the eternal Heaven!

**THOUGHTS** - "Riches, like dust, slip through our fingers even when we hold them fast." Matthew Henry

Man takes great pains to heap up riches, and they are like heaps of manure in the furrows of the field, good for nothing unless they be spread. Matthew Henry

There is a burden of care in getting riches, fear in keeping them, temptation in using them, guilt in abusing them, sorrow in losing them, and a burden of account at last to be given concerning them. Matthew Henry

Death is the final mockery of materialism. We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. If a man has lived to accumulate good, how indescribably tragic his dying! Herbert M. Carson

There is not a vice which more effectually contracts and deadens the feelings, which more completely makes a man's affections centre in himself and excludes all others from partaking in them, than the desire of accumulating possessions. Thomas Manton

Materialism, open or disguised, is the logical result of thinking that above and beyond this world there is nothing else. Stephen Olford

If your treasure is on earth, you are going from it; if it is in heaven, you are going to it. Anon.

No amount of riches can atone for poverty of character. Anon.

In the day of prosperity we have many refuges to resort to; in the day of adversity, only one. Horatius Bonar

We can stand affliction better than we can stand prosperity, for in prosperity we forget God. D. L. Moody

It is hard to carry a full cup without a spill. C. H. Spurgeon

Make as much as you can, save as much and give as much as you can. John Wesley

Earthly goods are given to be used. Hoarding is idolatry. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

We give Thee but Thine own.

Whate'er the gift may be:

All that we have Is Thine Alone,

A trust, O Lord, from Thee.

M&y we Thy bounties thus

As stewards true receive,

And gladly, as Thou blessest us,

To Thee our first-fruits give.

Deuteronomy 15:10

**Wiersbe on last days** - The last days" indicates that James believed that the coming of the Lord was near (see James 5:8-9)...We must "buy up the opportunity" (Eph. 5:16, literal translation) and work while it is day (John 9:4)....It is good to have the things that money can buy, provided you also have the things that money cannot buy. What good is a \$500,000 house if there is no home? Or a million-dollar diamond ring if there is no love? James did not condemn riches or rich people; he condemned the wrong use of riches, and rich people who use their wealth as a weapon and not as a tool with which to build. It is possible to be "poor in this world" (James 2:5) and yet rich in the next world. It is also possible to be "rich in this world" (1 Tim. 6:17) and poor in the next world. The return of Jesus Christ will make some people poor and others rich, depending on the spiritual condition of their hearts. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). What we keep, we lose. What we give to God, we keep, and He adds interest to it

(Bible Exposition Commentary)

**ILLUSTRATION** - A famous preacher, known for his long sermons, was asked to give the annual "charity sermon" for the poor. It was suggested that if he preached too long, the congregation might not give as much as they should. The preacher read his text from Proverbs 19:17—"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again." His sermon indeed was brief: "If you like the terms, then put down your money." Yes, money talks. What will it say to you at the last judgment? (Wiersbe)

**Lehmann Strauss on last days** - The **last days** are days of crisis during which we should be giving thought as to how much we can give to the work of the Lord and in helping others, not how much we can hold for ourselves. The latter is folly indeed. One blast from God and the sum total of our possessions would be gone. Oh, beloved, do you want to be separated from your possessions? Do you want to see them perish without any benefit? I trust not. God does not give us His precious metals to rust nor garments to be

motheaten but as a means of assisting others in need. (James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James)

**Steven Cole** - When James (Jas 5:3) says, "It is in the last days you have stored up your treasure," he is referring to the entire period between Christ's ascension and second coming, which is viewed as "**the last days**" (Acts 2:17+; 2Ti 3:1+ Heb 1:2+). But death is "**the last day**" for all of us! As the rich fool in Jesus' parable found out, he had plenty stored up for this life, but when he died, he was poor where it mattered most—he was not rich toward God (Lu 12:16-21+). To be rich without God is to be short-sighted in light of eternity. To be rich without God gives temporary comfort and ease, but long-term misery. The ungodly rich mistakenly think that they are relieving themselves and their families from hardships through their wealth and possessions. But James says that they are storing up misery and hardship for the final judgment! The very thing that they trust in for comfort now will result in their final ruin. ([James 5:1-6 The Woes of Wealth Without God](#))

**Last** (2078)**eschatos** from **ek** = from, primarily as it relates to place) an adjective which means last in time as in this passage in James 5 or space/place (most remote) (Acts 1:8+, Acts 13:47+).

So when are **the last days**? The meaning of Hebrews 1:2+ is that at the very termination of the times in which God is speaking to man, He speaks, not through the prophets, but **in His Son**, Who is "the Word" (Jn 1:1-2+). So the writer of Hebrews is referring to the incarnation of God's Son at His First Coming. It follows that this is when the **last days** began. **Luke** utilizes the same **time phrase** writing that "**in the last days** God says that "I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind" (Acts 2:17+), a prophecy from Joel 2:28+ which was partially fulfilled at Pentecost, at the birth of the Church. Obviously Pentecost is related to the First Coming (and then the ascension) of Christ. We can therefore conclude that the **last days** were inaugurated by the First Coming of Christ. **Mounce** agrees noting that **eschatos** can refer specifically to Jesus' return on "the last day" or more generally to the period of time between His (Christ's) first and second coming." In his Second Epistle **Peter** exhorted us to be aware "that in the **last days** mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts and saying, "Where is the promise of **His coming**?" (2Pe 3:3,4+). In this context the mockers are not referring to the first but the [Second Coming](#) of Christ. It follows that the last days began with Christ's first coming and will extend to His Second Coming. In summary, the **last days** are the time period between the First and Second Comings of our Lord Jesus Christ. This time period overlaps with the so called "church age."

#### Related Resources:

- [Last Days](#)
- [Eschatos in the OT - Last Days in the Septuagint](#)

## NO HOARDING ALLOWED

The NET says this verse could be rendered "hoarded up treasure for the last days" for the rich were hoarding, grain, gold and garments. They thought their possessions made them rich but they in fact made them spiritually poor. Their possessions possessed them. They were slaves to their "god."

**Don Anderson** - Just like Judas allowed 30 pieces of silver to keep him from faithfulness to the Master: "YOU STORED UP TREASURE IN THE LAST DAYS." JUDAS or JESUS. SILVER or SAVIOR. MONEY or MASTER. Even believers need to remember that although we may possess things, ultimately we do not own them for God is the Owner of everything and we are to be His wise, willing stewards of His wealth (read 1 Cor 4:2). As Wiersbe says "What we do on earth is recorded in heaven, and God keeps the books and pays the interest."

Riches are deceptive, for the rich think they are piling up wealth, but the truth is they are piling up judgment! Woe!

James is not saying it is a sin to save money (cf 2 Cor 12:14, 1 Ti 5:8, Mt 25:27).

**Stored up your treasure** (2343)**thesaurizo** from **thesauros** = treasure) originally meant to amass or reserve, keep in store, lay, store or treasure up goods for future use. Later **thesaurizo** was expanded to denote a chamber or chest in which treasure was kept. Throughout the ancient Middle East it was especially applied to a temple storehouse, where temple taxes were stored. People were required to give a portion of their produce to the temple, and this was stored in a treasury. Finally **thesaurizo** also meant private money boxes, the early versions of home safes.

**THOUGHT** - If your treasure is on earth, you are going from it; if it is in heaven, you are going to it

The root word **thesauros** means that which is deposited = a place where something is kept and gives our English word **thesaurus**, a treasury of words. In secular Greek **thesauros** means a treasure chamber, a storage room, storehouse, granary, strong-box or a treasure per se. Sometimes **thesauros** was used metaphorically of the treasure itself (Mt. 2:11; 19:21; Mk 10:21; Lk 6:45). Even at a very early period temples were built with treasure chambers, where gifts and taxes in kind and money could be stored. The practice

appears to have spread from Egypt to Greece. Collecting boxes were also known (cf. 2Ki 12:10).

The verb **thesaurizo** is used similarly in the sense of (1) storing up as treasure or offerings of money put aside (1Co 16:2 = teaches proportional giving, regular giving, and the church's role in receiving gifts.) or (2) putting it in safe keeping. Keep something in store (eg, present heavens and earth are being kept in store for future wrath in His day of judgment - 2Pe 3:7±)! Paul has a similar figurative use referring to God's wrath which is being "treasured" up (Ro 2:5±)!

**THOUGHT** - While James is speaking to the rich, he is speaking to believers of all ages also - in a word "Don't cheat anyone out of money!" And this included your taxes! (cf Lev 19:13+, cf Dt 24:14-15; Je 22:13; Mal 3:5) How said when we hear some unsaved person complaining about the Christians who are either late on paying their bills or not paying them at all!

**Wiersbe Illustrates** - I recall meeting a doctor friend while I was visiting in the hospital. "How are things going?" I asked, and he replied, "Oh, I guess things are OK." "I pray for you," I told him, wanting to be an encouragement. "I appreciate that," he replied. "But while you're at it, pray for all the people who owe me money. It'd help if they would pay up!"

## Sharing the Wealth

Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you. —James 5:3

Today's Scripture: Luke 12:13-21

One of the most popular TV programs in the US is Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? But the amount of money to be won is a mere pittance when compared with the amount suggested by the title of another contest: "I Wanna Be A Gazillionaire Geek." Since 1989, the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has offered a prize to students who team up to create the best plan for starting a business. And what's the incentive? Public welfare? Community service? Alleviating poverty? No, the goal is to make money simply to be rich.

Although Scripture doesn't condemn wealth, it certainly warns against the pursuit of money as an end in itself. Our Lord strongly denounced putting our confidence in riches as a source of pride and security (Matthew 6:24; Luke 12:15). Therefore, our prayer should be: "Give me neither poverty nor riches" (Proverbs 30:8).

And what if the Lord blesses us with resources beyond what we need? The apostle Paul urged believers to work with their hands and do "what is good, that [they] may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28). That's the principle of stewardship—sharing our wealth to help others. —: Vernon Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Reflect & Pray

We give Thee but Thine own,  
Whate'er the gift may be:  
All that we have is Thine alone,  
A trust, O Lord, from Thee. —How

Wealth is a double blessing when you share it with others.

**James 5:4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.**

NET James 5:4 Look, the pay you have held back from the workers who mowed your fields cries out against you, and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

GNT James 5:4 δο μισθ ζ τ ν ργατ ν τ ν μησ ντων τ ζ χ ρας μ ν πεστερημ νος φ μ ν κρ ζει, κα α βοα τ ν θερισ ντων ε ζ τ τα κυρ ου Σαβα θ ε σεληλ θασιν.

NLT James 5:4 For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The wages you held back cry out against you. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

KJV James 5:4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back

by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

ESV James 5:4 Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

ASV James 5:4 Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

CSB James 5:4 Look! The pay that you withheld from the workers who reaped your fields cries out, and the outcry of the harvesters has reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts.

NIV James 5:4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

NKJ James 5:4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

NRS James 5:4 Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

YLT James 5:4 lo, the reward of the workmen, of those who in-gathered your fields, which hath been fraudulently kept back by you -- doth cry out, and the exclamations of those who did reap into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth have entered;

NAB James 5:4 Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

NJB James 5:4 Can you hear crying out against you the wages which you kept back from the labourers mowing your fields? The cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord Sabaoth.

GWN James 5:4 The wages you refused to pay the people who harvested your fields shout to God against you. The Lord of Armies has heard the cries of those who gather the crops.

BBE James 5:4 See, the money which you falsely kept back from the workers cutting the grass in your field, is crying out against you; and the cries of those who took in your grain have come to the ears of the Lord of armies.

- **the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields** Lev 19:13 De 24:14,15 Job 24:10,11 31:38,39 Isa 5:7 Jer 22:13 Hab 2:11 Mal 3:5 Col 4:1
- **cries out against you** Ge 4:10 Ex 2:23,24 3:9 22:22-24,27 De 24:15 Job 34:28 Ps 9:12 Lu 18:7
- **Lord of Sabaoth:** Ro 9:29 Isa 1:9
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## FUTURE REWARD FOR THE OPPRESSIVE RICH

**Behold** (2400) see note below on [idou](#). James uses **behold** in 4 times in chapter 5 (James 5:4, 7, 9, 11) and only two other times in the entire letter (James 3:4, 5+). Do you think he is trying to get the attention of his readers in this closing chapter? That's a rhetorical question of course. Last words are often lasting words.

**The pay of the laborers who mowed your fields** - Apparently the rich were rich because they were landowners, and controlled much of the land in Galilee. And they got rich by defrauding their laborers (who had no legally binding contracts with their rich employers), as many men have done throughout history. But God will not be mocked. These men sow to the flesh and shall reap corruption! (Gal 6:7-8+)

**Pay** (wages) (3408)(**misthos**) literally refers to pay which is due for labor performed or dues paid for work. **Misthos** is used in two general senses in the NT, either to refer to wages or to reward, recognition or recompense. In this latter figurative usage, **misthos** refers to rewards which God bestows for the moral quality of an action, such rewards most often to be bestowed in eternity future.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15 was very clear stating

"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."

**Jeremiah** echoes Moses warning...

"Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness And his upper rooms without justice, Who uses his neighbor's services without pay And does not give him his wages, (Jer. 22:13)

**And which has been withheld by you, cries out against you** - ESV "which you kept back by **fraud**." These rich robbers will reap right recompense! As noted above **misthos** can mean recompense (wages) or reward which is apropos in this context for these unjust rich will receive a **just reward** for failing to give a **just recompense** to their workers.

**HCSB Study Bible.** - In ancient times payment for work performed was due at the end of the workday. Greed motivated some landowners to withhold these wages

Proverbs 13:11 Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles, But the one who gathers by labor increases it.

**Has been withheld** (879) **apostereo** from **apo** = from + **stereo** = to deprive means to deprive, wrong, rob, or defraud another of what belongs to him. **BDAG** says "to cause another to suffer loss by taking away through illicit means, rob, steal, despoil, defraud." In 1 Cor 7:5 **BDAG** says the sense is "to prevent someone from having the benefit of something (deprive)." Note that significantly **apostereo** (or **aphustereo**) is in the **perfect tense** which speaks of an abiding condition -- in short, this tense indicates that the laborers will NEVER get the wages due to them!

Note that some manuscripts have the verb **aphustereo** (**apo** = from + **hustereo** = to come short) which means to keep back by fraud instead of **apostereo** which has a similar meaning.

**Gilbrant on apostereo** - The **Septuagint** employs **apostereō** as a translation for the Hebrew words 'āshaq and gāra'. This last word describes the action of a man who deprives his first wife of support and conjugal relations after taking a second wife for himself (Exodus 21:10). The term 'āshaq refers to anyone who wrongfully keeps the salary due to his workers (Deuteronomy 24:14; Malachi 3:5+).

**Apostereo** in the NT - defraud (2), defrauded (1), deprived (1), depriving (1) = Mk. 10:19; 1 Co. 6:7-8; 1 Co. 7:5; 1 Ti 6:5; Jas 5:4

"You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not **defraud**, (VARIATION OF COMMANDMENT WHICH SAYS "DO NOT STEAL") HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER."

Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather **be defrauded**? 8 On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and **defraud**. (ACQUIRE BY FRAUDULENT MEANS) You do this even to your brethren.

**Stop depriving** (**present imperative with a negative**) one another (OF INTIMATE RELATIONS = depriving of that which is due to the condition of natural relationship of husband and wife), except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Cor 7:5)

And constant friction between men of depraved mind and **deprived** of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. (1 Ti 6:5)

**Apostereo** in the Septuagint - Ex. 21:10; Mal. 3:5+;

The use in **Malachi** definitely parallels James' rebuke to the rich

"Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and **against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages** (Septuagint = **apostereo** translated into English as "against them that keep back the hireling's wages"), the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says **the LORD of hosts (Sabaoth)**. (Malachi 3:5+)

**Comment** - Notice also that this warning of coming judgment is from the **Lord of hosts** (Sabaoth) just as it is here in James 5:4. The Septuagint of Malachi 3:5 translates Lord of hosts with the Greek title **pantokrator** (which is derived from **pás** = all + **kratos** = strength or might, especially manifested power, the power to rule or control) is literally the ruler over all or the One Who controls all things and Who has power over everything. The One in total control! **Pantokrator** thus describes God's sovereign, omnipotent, irresistible power. That is the One who these wicked wealthy are destined and doomed to face!

My times are in thy hand:  
I'll always trust in thee;  
And, after death, at thy right hand  
I shall for ever be.

**H A Ironside** writes that "God is not an uninterested spectator. He is deeply concerned about the injustice and oppression which cause such bitter suffering. As of old, He heard the cries of the slaves in Egypt when they sighed and groaned because of their unfair and wicked treatment by the taskmasters of Pharaoh. So he still takes note of every wrong that the privileged and powerful inflict upon the poor and the downtrodden."

**And the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth-** Note that James speaks of this in the past tense. There will be future repercussions, but the oppressed can be confident the Lord has heard their cry.

**Outcry** (995)(*boe*) means a cry, an outcry or an exclamation as for help. The only NT use is in James 5:4. In secular Greek *boé* referred to a loud cry, shout, a battle-cry, the roar of the sea, the sound of musical instruments, the cry of birds or beasts.

**Harvesting** (2325)(*therizo* from *théros* = summer, harvest time ~ time of harvests) conveys the picture of cutting ripe grain and gathering the bundles together. To reap, to harvest, harvest, reaping. The immutable law of sowing and reaping dictates that we can be assured that these unjust rich will reap what they sow. (Gal 6:7-9).

## LORD OF HOSTS OF ARMIES OF HEAVEN!

**Lord of Sabaoth** -see study of [Jehovah Sabaoth, LORD of hosts \(of armies\)](#) "It was suitable for James to use this familiar Old Testament title (Ps. 24:10) in a letter to Jewish Christians, for they would have understood that the choice of this particular name of God was especially appropriate in this context. The rich oppress the poor because they think no one will stand up for them. But the Lord of all the hosts of heaven and earth is their **Defender**, (ED: [Covenant Defender](#)) and He is coming back to make all things right (James 5:7)." (Nelson's NKJV Study Bible)

The **Lord of Sabaoth** (of hosts, of heaven's armies) pictures God as a GREAT WARRIOR going into battle against his enemies including the enemies of His children! A classic example is David fighting Goliath

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you **in the name of the LORD of hosts**, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted.(1 Sam. 17:45)

**Sabaoth** (4519)(*sabaoth*) is transliterated from the Hebrew **sabaoth** (armies, hosts). The Hebrew term *tseva'ah* (plural form of [tsaba' 06635](#), "army") which means "armies, hosts." It appears in the **Septuagint** as part of a compound that includes the divine name of God, [LORD of hosts](#). In 1 Samuel 17:45 the "hosts" refer to the armies of Israel. However, in the prophetic literature **Sabaōth** is used in nonmilitary contexts, perhaps referring to supernatural beings (Isaiah 40:26). In either case it is clear that its usage with the divine name of God indicates that He is sovereignly all-powerful over all created beings both human and supernatural. "Hosts" (*sabaōth*) refers to the innumerable armies of heaven God places at His disposal, displaying His indomitable power (undefeatable plan).

**Wiersbe** writes that "This is the "military" name of God, for 'hosts' comes from a Hebrew word which means "to wage war." The Lord is the Commander of the hosts and heaven: the stars (Is. 40:26; Gen. 2:1), the angels (Ps. 103:20, 21), the armies of Israel (Ex. 12:41), and all who trust in Him (Ps. 46:7, 11)."

In James 5:4 the "Lord of Hosts" is a descriptive title of God's omnipotence to carry out the just recompense against who use their wealth to oppress the poor. The all-powerful God knows of such injustice and will vindicate their victims.

**Tom Constable** writes that "The title "Lord of Sabaoth" (lit. Lord of Hosts, i.e., Lord Almighty; cf. Is 5:9; Ro 9:29) emphasizes the sovereign omnipotence of God. Although the oppressed may appear to have no defenders on earth, they have as their helper the Lord God omnipotent in heaven."

In the OT the basic term "hosts" along with the cognate verb refers to the mustering of troops for war.

**THOUGHT** - To summarize, the **LORD of hosts, Jehovah Sabaoth** is the Name of God we find used in Scripture when a man or woman is at the end of their rope so to speak -- Jehovah Sabaoth is the **Strong Tower** which God has made available for those times when we fail and are powerless, when our resources are inadequate, when there is no other help. And it is especially during those times that one comes to appreciate that God is truly the LORD of the Armies & of all hosts. In short, Jehovah Sabaoth speaks of God's available

power in our time of trouble.

**Lord (master, owner)(2962)(kurios)** from **kuros** = might or power, related to **kuroo** = to give authority) primarily means the possessor, owner, master, the supreme one, one who is sovereign (used this way of Roman emperors - Act 25:26) and possesses absolute authority, absolute ownership and uncontested power. Kurios is used of the one to whom a person or thing belonged, over which he has the power of deciding, the one who is the master or disposer of a thing (Mk 7:28). Jesus is Lord over the hosts (of angels), the armies of Heaven! He is the One Who hears the cries of the oppressed and will mete out punishment accordingly to their oppressors for He Alone has the power to do so.

**THOUGHT** - Are you now or have you been mistreated unfairly (marriage, work, etc)? Then your "day" of retribution is coming. Your oppressors may have looked victorious in time, but they will be miserable throughout eternity for their unjust, oppressive treatment of others, including yourself!

#### Parallels Between Leviticus 19 and Epistle of James

LEVITICUS 19		JAMES	
Lv 19:12	You shall not swear	Js 5:12	Do not swear
Lv 19:13	Wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning	Js 5:4	Pay of the laborers who mowed your fields which has been withheld by you
Lv 19:15	You shall not be partial	Js 2:1,9	Show no partiality
Lv 19:18	You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge	Js 5:9	Do not complain against one another
Lv 19:18	You shall love your neighbor as yourself	Js 2:8	You shall love your neighbor as yourself

**James 5:5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.**

NET James 5:5 You have lived indulgently and luxuriously on the earth. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

GNNT James 5:5 τριψ σατε π τς γς κα σπαταλ σατε, θρ ψατε τς καρδ ας μ ν ν μρ σφαγς,

NLT James 5:5 You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter.

KJV James 5:5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

ESV James 5:5 You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

ASV James 5:5 Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter.

CSB James 5:5 You have lived luxuriously on the land and have indulged yourselves. You have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter.

NIV James 5:5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.

NKJV James 5:5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

NRS James 5:5 You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

YLT James 5:5 ye did live in luxury upon the earth, and were wanton; ye did nourish your hearts, as in a day of slaughter;

NAB James 5:5 You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter.

NJB James 5:5 On earth you have had a life of comfort and luxury; in the time of slaughter you went on eating to your heart's content.

GWN James 5:5 You have lived in luxury and pleasure here on earth. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter.

BBE James 5:5 You have been living delicately on earth and have taken your pleasure; you have made your hearts fat for a day of destruction.

- **You have lived luxuriously on the earth** 1Sa 25:6,36 Job 21:11-15 Ps 17:14 73:7 Ec 11:9 Isa 5:11,12 Isa 47:8 56:12 Am 6:1,4-6 Lu 16:19,25 1Ti 5:6 2Ti 3:4 Jude 1:12 Rev 18:7
- **led a life of wanton pleasure:** Isa 3:16 Ro 13:13
- **in a day of slaughter:** Pr 7:14 17:1 Isa 22:13 Eze 39:17 Rev 19:17,18
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **WARNING AGAINST LIVING LUXURIOUSLY AT EXPENSE OF THE POOR**

**You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure**- NIV = "You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence." This life is as good as it gets for these people ("their heaven"), while it is as bad as it gets for believers ("our hell")! Sinful high style on earth will bring sure "high" suffering in Hell! James is saying "You used your wealth unwisely for your own self-gratification rather than being a good steward of that which God has given you." (Anderson)

**THOUGHTS** - Self-indulgent - characterized by doing or tending to do exactly what one wants, especially when this involves pleasure or idleness. Excessive or unrestrained gratification of one's own appetites, desires, or whims. Allowing yourself to have or do anything you want.

Luxury has a way of ruining character. It is a form of self-indulgence. If you match character with wealth, you can produce much good; but if you match self-indulgence with wealth, the result is sin. Warren Wiersbe

Comfort comes as a guest, lingers to become a host, and stays to enslave us.

Where there is no want there is usually much wantonness. John Flavel

Riches may leave us while we live; we must leave them when we die. Thomas Fuller

Riches rather enlarge than satisfy appetites. Thomas Fuller

The world's foolish mantra is "You need to be a little bit self-indulgent today as by tomorrow, reality will kick in." You only go around once so get all the gusto you can.

**Lived luxuriously** (only here in NT)[\(5171\)\(truphao\)](#) means to lead a life of self-indulgence, revel, carouse, live in luxury, to live softly, delicately, luxuriously, to fare sumptuously, to give oneself to self-indulgence, live for pleasure, to be licentious, revel, run riot, wax wanton, to be extravagant. **BDAG** - truphao is used "of animals be contented, well fed (Philo, Dec. 117) Hs 6, 1, 6; 6, 2, 6 (though the sheep here represent luxury-loving people)."

**Gilbrant** - Classical Greek commonly employs the word truphaō when speaking about well-fed, contented animals. It can carry the connotation of being insolent or putting on an air of superiority. It is also used figuratively of reveling in doing good (Bauer). The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) uses it of the Israelites growing fat from enjoying the bounties of Canaan after they occupied it (Nehemiah 9:25). It also speaks of this same kind of experience during the Millennium when the Israelites will enjoy the abundance of the land God will give them (Isaiah 66:11). (See also Sirach 14:4.) ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**James'** description reminds us of the OT prophet **Amos**...

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion And to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria, The distinguished men of the foremost of nations, To whom the house of Israel comes. 2 Go over to Calneh and look, And go from there to Hamath the great, Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms, Or is their territory greater than yours? 3 Do you put off the day of calamity, And would you bring near the seat of violence? 4 Those who recline on beds of ivory And sprawl on their couches, And eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall, 5 Who improvise to the sound of the harp, And like David have composed songs for themselves, 6 Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint

themselves with the finest of oils, Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. 7 Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the sprawlers' banqueting will pass away. (Amos 6:1-7)

**ILLUSTRATION OF LIVED LUXURIOUSLY**- A magazine advertisement told of the shopping spree of an oil-rich sultan. He purchased nineteen Cadillacs, one for each of his nineteen wives, and paid extra to have the cars lengthened. He also bought two Porsches, six Mercedes, a \$40,000 speedboat and a truck for hauling it. Add to the list sixteen refrigerators, \$47,000 worth of women's luggage, two Florida grapefruit trees, two reclining chairs, and one slot machine. His total bill was \$1.5 million, and he had to pay another \$194,500 to have everything delivered. Talk about living in luxury! "Tell me what thou dost need," said the Quaker to his neighbor, "and I will tell thee how to get along without it." (Bible Exposition Commentary)

**Wanton pleasure** ([4684](#)) (**spatalao** from **spatálē** = luxury in eating and drinking) means to live in excess comfort or indulgence. It is used here and 1 Ti 5:6 = (following are to be excluded from those supported by the church) = "But she who gives herself to **wanton pleasure** is dead even while she lives." In the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) it is found in Ezekiel 16:49 where Sodom's indulgence is compared to that of the idle rich. This is precisely the life-style of the **rich man** in the parable" in Luke 16:19-31+ ("Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day."). It is as if the goods of the world, and the people on it, were made only for the gratification of their own lusts; and in their pursuit of their own pleasure, they ignore the needs of others and use them selfishly, even openly oppressing them.

**ESV Study Bible** - Like the cattle in their fields, the rich gorge themselves on luxuries and fail to realize that they are headed for the final slaughter (see Isa. 30:25; Jer. 12:3; Rev. 19:17-21).

## JUDGMENT IS ON THE WAY!

This could be subtitled "The Wages of the Wealthy" or "The Problems of Prosperity." Indeed, the wealthy would be wise if they heard and heeded the words of Hebrews 10:31±

It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

**You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter**- They satiated their fleshly appetites but starved their souls, which they were in fact preparing for judgment! James' vivid indictment points to the imminence of the coming day of judgment when they will be in effect "slaughtered" by God's sword of perfect justice! These apathetic, wicked rich are like unreasoning cattle who graze in the field all day long, getting fat not knowing that their day of slaughter is coming! And for these rich, the more selfish their lifestyle is, the great is the degree of guilt they will incur! (cf Jesus' teaching on degrees of punishment in hell = Mt 10:15, Mt 11:22-24)

**THOUGHTS**- No man can tell whether he is rich or poor by turning to his ledger. It is the heart that makes a man rich. He is rich or poor according to what he is, not according to what he has. - Henry Ward Beecher

Earthly riches are called thorns, and well they may; for as thorns, they pierce both head and heart; the head with cares in getting them, and the heart with grief in parting with them. - Thomas Brooks

A man may have enough of the world to sink him, but he can never have enough to satisfy him. Thomas Brooks

It is not the fact that a man has riches which keeps him from the kingdom of heaven, but the fact that riches have him. T. Caird

Daniel 5:27+ = "'TEKEL'—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient." With Belshazzar, those using their wealth for selfish satisfaction will one day be weighed in the balances and found wanting.

**NET Note** - James' point seems to be that instead of seeking deliverance from condemnation, they have defied God's law (fattened your hearts) and made themselves more likely objects of his judgment (in a day of slaughter).

**Habakkuk 2:9** "Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house To put his nest on high, To be delivered from the hand of calamity!

In view of the brevity of our life and the length of eternity which is closer to us than we believed - "Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy." (Ro 13:13±)

**Hearts** ([2588](#)) (**kardia**) does not refer to their physical organ but figuratively refers to the seat and center of their life. The heart is the center of their personality, and it controls their intellect, emotions, and will. **Kardia** used 5x by James - James 1:26, James 3:14, James 4:8, James 5:5, James 5:8.

**Kardia** gives us medical terms such as **cardiac**, **cardiovascular**, etc. Just as the integrity of our physical

heart is vital to our physical life, in a similar and even more important way the integrity of our spiritual **heart** is vital to our spiritual life, for our spiritual life impacts not just our enjoyment of time but of eternity.

**Spurgeon** writes "A short life should be wisely spent. We have not enough time at our disposal to justify us in misspending a single quarter of an hour. Neither are we sure of enough life to justify us in procrastinating for a moment. If we were wise in **heart** we should see this, but mere head wisdom will not guide us aright." See his full note on Ps 90:12-[note](#))

The great Puritan writer **John Flavel** wrote that "THE **heart** of man is his worst part before it is regenerated, and the best afterward; it is the seat of principles, and the fountain of actions.

**Gary Hill** rightly reminds us that "Life is a continuous contest, waged and won in the**heart**.

As the **heart** goes, so goes the rest of us. This is true in "both directions": *negatively* (Jn 14:1, 27; Acts 7:51, 8:21; Ro 1:21) and *positively* (Acts 16:14; Ro 2:29; Heb 10:22). The heart, as the seat of decision-making, also involves emotions (desires) that are key to making choices....Cognition (the use of the "mind") is vital, but the **heart** "steers our being" as the primary organ of decision-making." ([Discovery Bible](#))

This passage reminds me of **Abigail and Nabal** (Hebrew = fool) in the OT:

Then Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And **Nabal's heart was merry within him**, for he was very drunk; so she did not tell him anything at all until the morning light. But in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and **his heart died within him** so that he became as a stone. (1Sa 25:36-37)

**Steven Cole** - To be rich without God provides short-term advantages, but long-term loss. With wealth comes power, but as someone said, "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Throughout history corrupt dictators have amassed amazing power and wealth for themselves and their families. Some, such as Saddam Hussein and his sons, are brought down and face judgment in this life. Others, such as Mao Tse-tung and Joseph Stalin, seemed to get away with their many atrocities in this life. But nobody escapes from God's judgment! Like barn animals, they are only fattening their hearts for the day of slaughter! ([James 5:1-6](#)  
[The Woes of Wealth Without God](#))

James describes the tragic irony of their self-indulgence, as they fatten their own hearts for their day of slaughter. They are pictured as just like hogs coming under the butcher's knife, or turkeys awaiting their sure fate before Thanksgiving. Paul describes their "fattened hearts" in Romans 2...

But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant**heart** you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS (Ro 2:5-6±)

**Slaughter** ([4967](#)) (**sphage** from **sphazo** = to slay) literally means to slaughter) by cutting or slashing the throat. Three uses - Acts 8:32+, Ro 8:36±, James 5:5. In Ro 8:36± (quoting the [Septuagint](#) of Ps 44:22) where "we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." **Sphage** is used idiomatically here in James 5:5 in the phrase "in a day of slaughter."

In Acts 8:32+ the Ethiopian eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53:7+ which describes the sheep being led to the "slaughter" without resistance or complaint. What is the Acts 8:32 passage saying? Neither the sheep nor the lamb opens its mouth before they experience either death or shearing. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy in Mt 26:62-63; Mt 27:12-14; Mk 14:61; Mk 15:5; Lk 23:9; Jn 19:9; 1Pe 2:23.

**Friberg** on possible meanings of in **the day of slaughter** - (1) for a day marked for or characterized by slaughter, in reference to a time of destructive judgment; (2) in a day of slaughter, in reference to rich people fattening themselves, i.e. amassing more wealth at the expense of poor people in a troubled time; the first alternative is to be preferred in view of James's threatening tone against the rich in James 5.1-3

**Gilbrant** - **Sphagē** is used in classical Greek for the "slaughter" of animals, particularly for sacrifices. The term is used literally to identify the throat, "the place between the collar-bones where sacrifices are usually slain" ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Sphage** in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) -

Job 10:16; Job 21:20; Job 27:14; Ps 44:22 = "We are considered as sheep **to be slaughtered**"; Pr 7:22 = " Suddenly he follows her As an ox goes to the **slaughter**"; Isa 34:2; Isa 34:6; Isa 53:7; Isa 65:12; Jer. 12:3 = "Drag them off like sheep for the **slaughter**"; Jer. 15:3; Jer. 19:6 = "this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of **Slaughter**"; Jer. 25:34; Jer. 48:15; Jer. 50:27 = "Let them

go down to the **slaughter!**"; Jer. 51:40 = "I will bring them down like lambs to the **slaughter**"; Ezek. 21:15; Obad. 1:10; Zech. 11:4 "Pasture the flock doomed to **slaughter**"; Zech. 11:7

Perhaps it would be good to refresh our mind on Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus

"Now there was a **rich man**, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 20 "And a **poor man named Lazarus** was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. 22" Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and \*saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' 25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' 27 "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house— 28 for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, **so that they will not also come to this place of torment.**' ([basanos](#)) 29 "But Abraham \*said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' 30 "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' 31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'" (Lk 16:19-31+)

#### Related Resource:

- [Quotes on Money](#)

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**ILLUSTRATIONS** - After Imelda Marcos and her husband Ferdinand were deposed, Newsweek (3/24/86) ran an article on her pathetic life. When they fled the country, she left behind a closet with 3,000 pairs of shoes and five shelves of unused Gucci handbags, still stuffed with paper and the price tags attached. She had 500 bras, a trunk full of girdles, huge bottles of perfume, and vats of Christian Dior wrinkle cream. She was known to spend \$12 million on jewelry in a single day in Switzerland! One U. S. Representative gawked at the stuff and said, "It was the worst case of conspicuous consumerism I have ever seen." She once told an interviewer, "I am my little people's star and slave. When I go out into the barrios, I get dressed up because I know the little people want to see a star." How tragic! Of course, Imelda Marcos did not claim to follow Christ.

But I've read of a well-known Christian entertainer who collects Rolls Royces as his hobby! He owns a dozen or more! I realize that luxury is a relative term and it's easy to judge the extravagant examples and justify ourselves. We need to examine ourselves prayerfully and often, so that we don't fall into what James is condemning. I believe that the Lord wants us to live simply and manage our resources in light of His eternal purposes.

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#### Be Content

He that is down needs fear no fall,  
He that is low, no pride;  
He that is humble ever shall  
Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,  
Little be it or much;  
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,  
Because Thou savest such.

Fullness to such a burden is  
That go on pilgrimage;  
Here little, and hereafter bliss,  
Is best from age to age.

John Bunyan

#### Related Resources:

- [Christian Contentment](#)
- [Contentment-Devotional](#)

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## Misers

John G. Wendel and his sisters were some of the most miserly people of all time. Although they had received a huge inheritance from their parents, they spent very little of it and did all they could to keep their wealth for themselves. John was able to influence five of his six sisters never to marry, and they lived in the same house in New York City for 50 years. When the last sister died in 1931, her estate was valued at more than \$100 million. Her only dress was one that she had made herself, and she had worn it for 25 years. The Wendels had such a compulsion to hold on to their possessions that they lived like paupers. Even worse, they were like the kind of person Jesus referred to "who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God? (Luke 12:21).

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**Looking In A Mirror** - One day a certain old, rich man of a miserable disposition visited a rabbi, who took the rich man by the hand and led him to a window. 'look out there,?' he said. The rich man looked into the street. "What do you see"? asked the rabbi. "I see men, women, and children,?" answered the rich man. Again the rabbi took him by the hand and this time led him to a mirror. "Now what do you see"? "Now I see myself,?" the rich man replied. Then the rabbi said, "Behold, in the window there is glass, and in the mirror there is glass. But the glass of the mirror is covered with a little silver, and no sooner is the silver added than you cease to see others, but you see only yourself.'

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**Zodhiates** - What great things God can do when a man's riches are placed at His disposal. Money is an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven and as a universal provider of everything except happiness.

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**John Piper helps us envision the final irony of materialism:** Picture 269 people entering eternity in a plane crash in the Sea of Japan. Before the crash there is a noted politician, a millionaire corporate executive, a playboy and his playmate. a missionary kid on the way back from visiting grandparents. After the crash they stand before God utterly stripped of MasterCards, checkbooks, cred it lines. image clothes. how-to-succeed books. and Hilton reservations. Here are the politician, the executive, the playboy, and the missionary kid. all on level ground with nothing, absolutely nothing in their hands, possessing only what they brought in their hearts. How absurd and tragic the lover of money will seem on that day - like a man who spends his whole life collecting train tickets and in the end is so weighed down by the collection he misses the last train! ([Quoted by Randy Alcorn in Money, Possessions and Eternity; Original quote from Desiring God, page 188](#)).

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**ILLUSTRATION** - For example, in 1923 a very important meeting was held at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Attending this meeting were nine of the world's most successful financiers: Charles Schwab, steel magnate; Samuel Insull, president of the largest utility company; Howard Hopson, president of the largest gas company; Arthur Cotton, the greatest wheat speculator; Richard Whitney, president of the New York Exchange; Albert Fall, a member of the President's Cabinet; Leon Frazier, president of the Bank of International Settlements; Jesse Livermore, the great "bear" on Wall Street; and Ivar Krueger, head of the most powerful monopoly. **Twenty-five years later**, Charles Schwab had died in bankruptcy, having lived on borrowed money for five years before his death; Samuel Insull had died a fugitive from justice and penniless in a foreign land; Howard Hopson was insane; Arthur Cotton had died abroad, insolvent; Richard Whitney had spent time in Sing Sing; Albert Fall had been pardoned so that he could die at home; Jesse Livermore, Ivar Krueger, and Leon Frazier had all died by suicide. All of these men had learned well the art of making a living, but none of them had learned HOW TO LIVE! (Bill Bright - [Revolution Now](#)) (ED: AND NONE HAD LEARNED HOW TO "DIE WELL!")

**THOUGHT - THE SECRET OF LIVING AND DYING WELL?** - Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance **I have learned the secret** of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. - Php 4:11-13±

## Related Resources:

- [Christian Contentment](#)
- [Contentment-Devotional](#)

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## To Be Better Off is Not Better

Dan Crawford (1870-1926) spent most of his adult life serving as a missionary in Africa. When it was time to return home to Britain,

Crawford described to an old Bantu the kind of world he was about to return to. He told him about ships that ran under the water, on the water, and even those that flew above the water. He described English houses with all of their conveniences, such as running water and electric lights. Then Crawford waited for the old African to register his amazement. "Is that all, Mr. Crawford"? the aged man asked. "Yes, I think it is,?" Crawford replied. Very slowly and very gravely, the old Bantu said, "Well, Mr. Crawford, you know, that to be better off is not to be better.?" The Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching & Preachers

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### **Wanted More (AKA "The myth of more")**

All he ever really wanted in life was more. He wanted more money, so he parlayed inherited wealth into a billion-dollar pile of assets. He wanted more fame, so he broke into the Hollywood scene and soon became a filmmaker and star. He wanted more sensual pleasures, so he paid handsome sums to indulge his every sexual urge. He wanted more thrills, so he designed, built, and piloted the fastest aircraft in the world. He wanted more power, so he secretly dealt political favors so skillfully that two U.S. presidents became his pawns. All he ever wanted was more. He was absolutely convinced that more would bring him true satisfaction. Unfortunately, history shows otherwise. He concluded his life emaciated; colorless; sunken chest; fingernails in grotesque, inches-long corkscrews; rotting, black teeth; tumors; innumerable needle marks from his drug addiction. **Howard Hughes** died believing the **myth of more**. He died a billionaire junkie, insane by all reasonable standards. Bill Hybels in Leadership

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### **Thankful For Material Things**

In her book, Discipline, the Glad Surrender, Elisabeth Elliot reveals four meaningful lessons to be learned from the discipline of our possessions: 'the first lesson is that all things are given by God...Because God gives us things indirectly by enabling us to make them with our own hands (out of things He has made, of course) or to earn the money to buy them...we are prone to forget that He gave them to us. We should be thankful. Thanksgiving requires the recognition of the Source. It implies contentment with what is given, not complaint...it excludes covetousness. The third lesson is that things can be material for sacrifice. The Father pours out His blessings on us; we, His creatures, receive them with open hands, give thanks, and lift them up as an offering back to Him...This lesson leads naturally to the fourth which is that things are given to us to enjoy for awhile...What is not at all fitting or proper is that we should set our hearts on them. Temporal things must be treated as temporal things'received, given thanks for, offered back but enjoyed. In Touch,

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All materialism is atheistic. - Martyn-Lloyd Jones

### **Related Resources:**

- [Various Quotes on Materialism](#)
- [More Quotes](#)

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### **Money Trouble**

Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare. —1 Timothy 6:9

When I was in Haiti, I saw a poor elderly woman at a mission station. She had walked miles for a meal, yet she was sharing her food with a young girl. When I mentioned this to "Granny," a veteran missionary, she said, "Herb, the very poor are much more generous than the very rich."

I think Granny was right. While some multimillionaires are godly, generous, and kind, they are the exception rather than the rule.

From the days of the Old Testament prophets until now, many of the rich have exploited the poor. James warned his generation that the wealth of those who oppress the poor "will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire" (Jas. 5:3).

Even today, the rich contribute relatively little to charitable causes. Popular author Vance Packard says that the USA has at least 800 people worth more than \$100 million. How much do they give to church and charity? Less than 2%!

I have sometimes wished I had wealth, thinking of all the good I could do with it. But would I? Paul warned that coveting riches is a snare (1 Tim. 6:9). Realizing this, we should honor the wealthy who are generous. We should also thank God for the blessings He gives us, and then give as lavishly as we can out of that abundance. By Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### **For Further Study**

Compare the rich young ruler (Lk. 18:18-27)

with the believers at Macedonia (2 Cor. 8:1-6).

Who gave generously? How does this apply to your life?

He who has no money is poor; he who has nothing but money is even poorer.

### James 5:6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you.

NET James 5:6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous person, although he does not resist you.

GNT James 5:6 κατεδίκ σατε, φονε σατε τ ν δ καιον, ο κ ντιτ σσεται μ ν.

NLT James 5:6 You have condemned and killed innocent people, who do not resist you.

KJV James 5:6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

ESV James 5:6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

ASV James 5:6 Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one; he doth not resist you.

CSB James 5:6 You have condemned-- you have murdered-- the righteous man; he does not resist you.

NIV James 5:6 You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

NKJ James 5:6 You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

NRS James 5:6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you.

YLT James 5:6 ye did condemn -- ye did murder the righteous one, he doth not resist you.

NAB James 5:6 You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous one; he offers you no resistance.

NJB James 5:6 It was you who condemned the upright and killed them; they offered you no resistance.

GWN James 5:6 You have condemned and murdered people who have God's approval, even though they didn't resist you.

BBE James 5:6 You have given your decision against the upright man and have put him to death. He puts up no fight against you.

- **You have condemned:** Jas 2:6 Mt 21:38 23:34,35 27:20,24,25 Joh 16:2,3 Ac 2:22,23 Ac 3:14,15 4:10-12 7:52 13:27,28 22:14 1Th 2:15,16
- **He does not resist you:** Isa 53:7 Mt 5:39 26:53,54 Lu 22:51-53 Joh 19:9-11 Ac 8:32 1Pe 2:22,23
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## CONDEMNATION AND COMMISSION OF MURDER

**You have condemned and put to death the righteous man-** Is James speaking literally or figuratively? It could be both. Certainly figuratively the rich would in effect "put to death the righteous man" by cheating him out of his wages to point that he and his family were forced into starvation. The idea of **condemned** is that the rich took advantage of the legal system (e.g., possibly by hiring the best silver-tongued lawyers, influencing judges with bribes, etc - nothing new!) to give them an unfair advantage over the poor. They dragged the poor into the law courts. And they did it all under the pretentious guise of "It's all legal! We are not breaking any laws!" Technically they were correct, but morally they were rotten to the core and broke God's laws regarding just treatment of one's fellow man. Their mouths will not be able to make any vain defense before the Judge Who sees their hearts (Hebrews 4:12-13<sub>+</sub>, Rev 20:11-15<sub>+</sub>). The rich who condemned will be condemned (cf Hos 8:7a).

**You have condemned** (2613)([katadikazo](#)) from **κατα** = + against + **δικάζω** = to judge, pronounce sentence from **δίκη** = judgment) means to give judgment against a person, recognize the evidence against him, pass sentence, condemn. In the present context **katadikazo** describes unjust judgment against the just cause of the innocent which is tantamount to depriving "a man of justice" (Lamentations 3:36NIV]).

One Jewish writer, Joshua ben Sira, wrote, "The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a man of blood. To take away a neighbor's living is to murder him; to deprive an employee of his wages is to shed blood."

**Wiersbe** comments that "It is often the case that those who have wealth also have political power and can get what they want.

"What is the Golden Rule?" asked a character in a comic strip. His friend answered, "Whoever has the gold makes the rules!" James asked, "Do not the rich men oppress you and draw you before the judgment seats?" (James 2:6+)...When God established Israel in her land, He gave the people a system of courts (see Deut. 17:8-13). He warned the judges not to be greedy (Ex. 18:21). They were not to be partial to the rich or the poor (Lev. 19:15). No judge was to tolerate perjury (Deut. 19:16-21). Bribery was condemned by the Lord (Isa. 33:15; Micah 3:11; 7:3). The Prophet Amos denounced the judges in his day who took bribes and "fixed" cases (Amos 5:12, 15). (Bible Exposition Commentary)

**Don Anderson** has an interesting thought that "It would seem on this fourth and fifth statement - condemned...murdered) James has in mind the experience of CAIN AND ABEL. Cain not only condemned Abel after his acceptance by God, but murdered him, and Abel offered him no resistance. (Ge 4:5-9)

**Put to death** (committed murder)(5407)(**phroneuo** from **phonos** = murder) means to kill unjustly, "to deprive a person of life by illegal, intentional killing." (Louw-Nida) Reaffirmation of the sixth commandment prohibiting murder is found in Mt. 5:21<sup>+</sup>. James uses this verb 3x - Jas. 2:11+ (DO NOT COMMIT MURDER."); Jas. 4:2 (You lust and do not have; so you commit murder.); Jas. 5:6.

These persecuted **righteous** Christians were faithfully following the instructions of their Lord Jesus

"You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' 39 "But I say to you, **do not resist** an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 "**If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt**, let him have your coat also. 41 "**Whoever forces you to go one mile**, go with him two. 42 "**Give to him who asks of you**, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. (Matthew 5:38-42<sup>+</sup>).

**Comment** - These exhortation, some of which are in the form of commands, are not humanly possible. That's Jesus' point. You cannot carry out these attitudes and actions in your own natural power! You must rely wholly on the Holy Spirit! [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!"

**He does not resist you** - This phrase reminds us of the Ro 8:36<sup>+</sup> passage describing believers "Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." Possibly the poor did not resist because they could not afford a defense lawyer. Whatever the specifics were, it is clear that the poor realized they were no match for the wicked rich oppressors and so they acquiesced out of necessity. MacArthur says in fact they maintained "a spirit of gentleness and meekness. By so doing they manifested the same attitude as Christ, who "while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23)."

This is true of no Righteous Man more than Jesus the Scriptures recording "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth." (Isaiah 53:7+) "WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. (1 Peter 2:22-23<sup>+</sup>).

**Resist** (498)(**antitasso** from **anti** = against + **tasso** = order, set) means to set an army in array against, to arrange in battle order (to line oneself up against). The idea is to resist, to oppose, to be hostile toward. **Antitasso** is in the [present tense](#) which indicates non-resistance was their continual attitude toward the oppression and defrauding of the rich.

In another use in James 4:6<sup>+</sup> God **opposes** the proud—all who oppress others—no matter who they are. The word **'resist'** is a strong word which pictures an army set and arrayed against the enemy. **Antitasso** was a military term found in the papyri meaning "to range in battle against" and pictured an army arrayed against the enemy forces. It means to oppose someone, involving a psychological attitude and also corresponding behavior. It means to "to be an enemy of" or "to resist with assembled forces."

**ILLUSTRATION**- A businessman once had an angel visit him, promising to grant one request. The man asked for a copy of the stock market page one year in the future. As he was studying the numbers on the future exchange and gloating over how much he would make because of his knowledge of the future, his eye glanced across the page. His picture was in the obituary column. Suddenly his new wealth faded into insignificance in light of his own death. Wealth is a good tool, if we are careful to use it as stewards for the Lord. But it is a dangerous trap if we adopt a worldly perspective towards it. I encourage you to examine often your stewardship of the resources that God has entrusted to you. Remember Paul's words, "It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy" (1Co 4:2). ([James 5:1-6 The Woes of Wealth Without God](#))

**James 5:7 Therefore be patient**, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the

**soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.**

NET James 5:7 So be patient, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's return. Think of how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the ground and is patient for it until it receives the early and late rains.

GNT James 5:7 Μακροθυμού σατε ο ν, δελφο, ως τ ο παρουσ ας το κυρ ου. δο γεωργ σ κδ χεται τ ν τ μιον καρπ ν τ ο γ ο μακροθυμ ν π ατ ως λ β πρ ιμον κα ψιμον.

NLT James 5:7 Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen.

KJV James 5:7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

ESV James 5:7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.

ASV James 5:7 Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain.

CSB James 5:7 Therefore, brothers, be patient until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth and is patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.

NIV James 5:7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.

NKJ James 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

NRS James 5:7 Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.

YLT James 5:7 Be patient, then, brethren, till the presence of the Lord; lo, the husbandman doth expect the precious fruit of the earth, being patient for it, till he may receive rain -- early and latter;

NAB James 5:7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.

NJB James 5:7 Now be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming. Think of a farmer: how patiently he waits for the precious fruit of the ground until it has had the autumn rains and the spring rains!

GWN James 5:7 Brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord comes again. See how farmers wait for their precious crops to grow. They wait patiently for fall and spring rains.

BBE James 5:7 Go on waiting calmly, my brothers, till the coming of the Lord, like the farmer waiting for the good fruit of the earth till the early and late rains have come.

- **be patient**, Lu 8:15 Ro 2:7 8:24,25 15:4 2Co 6:4,5 Ga 5:5 6:9 Col 1:11 1Th 1:3 Heb 6:15 12:1-3
- **until the coming of the Lord**: Jas 5:8,9 Mt 24:27,44 Lu 18:8 21:27 1Co 1:7 1Th 2:19 3:13 2Pe 3:4
- **until it gets the early and late rains**: Dt 11:14 Jer 5:24 Ho 6:3 Joel 2:23 Zec 10:1
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **BE PATIENT WHEN TREATED UNJUSTLY! JESUS IS COMING BACK!**

**Therefore (term of conclusion)** - In light of the preceding prophetic pronouncement on the rich oppressors, James arrives at this conclusion meant to encourage his brethren. **Cole** says "The connection (THEREFORE) is, "If you as a Christian have been badly wronged, be patient! The Lord will return soon, and when He comes, He will righteously judge every person. He will vindicate you. But, be careful, because He will judge you, too!"

**MacArthur** writes that in this next section James "shifts his focus from the persecutors to the persecuted, moving from condemning the faithless, abusive rich to comforting the faithful, abused poor. James also instructs the suffering poor as to what attitude they are to have in the midst of persecution. The theme of this section is defining how to be patient in trials....James was wise enough to

realize that believers might react wrongly to persecution. Even the apostle Paul, outraged at illegally being struck by order of the high priest, burst out "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall!" (Acts 23:3). That intemperate remark was an improper response to persecution, as Paul himself acknowledged (Acts 23:4–5). Those who face trials and persecution risk losing patience with their circumstances, with other people, even with God Himself....James gives six practical perspectives enabling believers to patiently endure trials: anticipate the Lord's coming, recognize the Lord's judgment, follow the Lord's servants, understand the Lord's blessing, realize the Lord's purpose, and consider the Lord's character (See [MacArthur's sermon for more elaboration](#)).

**Gregg Allen** - Often, when a believer is suffering because of being treated unjustly, he or she can fall into deep discouragement and say, "Why are they doing this to me? I just want it to end." And sometimes, they may even become tempted to take action to 'make' it end - or to get even somehow. James wrote to Christians under such pressure. But what he says to them in verses 7-8 is intended to bring them into the right perspective. Hope comes from having this right perspective - that is, that we are to look to Jesus Christ, and to see injustice as finding its ultimate resolve in His return. God, through His servant James, here teaches us that the strength to be patient when treated unjustly comes from fixing our hopes on the return of the Lord. We are "long-suffering" to the degree that we have our eyes fixed on Jesus and His glorious return. James builds this argument through three main assertions: (1) by telling us the attitude of spirit we're to have; (2) by then telling us what sort of perspective will give us this attitude; and (3) by exhorting us to take strengthen our hearts in this attitude. ([The Hope that Makes us Strong - James 5:7-8](#))

**Be patient, brethren - Brethren** identifies these as believers and in context they were believers who were being oppressed by the greedy rich. And so James presents a comforting hope for believers which signals a frightening end for the wicked rich in James 5:1-6. **Be patient** or **"be long-suffering"** is a command in the [aorist imperative](#), calling for them to "Just do it!" As **Lenski** says it is "strong and decisive!" The only way we can obey this command, is not by gazing at our often miserable, unfair circumstances, but by looking toward the imminent return of the Fairest of the fair, our lovely Lord Jesus, and at the same time relying wholly on the Holy Spirit's supernatural power to enable us to hang on. And they say a picture is worth a thousand words. The picture above is of a bomb with a very long fuse, which is a perfect picture of a Spirit filled and empowered saint, exhibiting a long burn before exploding. This is the essence of the verb **makrothumeo** (below) which depicts a long holding out of one's mind before giving way to passion or action. Don't try to obey this command by relying on your natural strength. You may be able to "grin and bear it" for a while but eventually your fleshly passion will take over.

Lord, please show me every day  
As you're teaching me your way  
That you'll do just what you say  
In your time.

([Play In His Time](#))

To underscore the need of every saint to depend on the Holy Spirit to manifest a "long fuse" under trials and temptation is the fact that the related noun, [makrothumia](#), is a component of the **fruit of the Spirit** in Gal 5:22+ - "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness." James uses the noun form below in James 5:10<sub>±</sub>.

**Makrothumeo** has to do with patience with adverse people, while the similar verb [hypomeno](#) has more to do with patience with adverse circumstances and is used in James 5:11<sub>±</sub>.

As **Hiebert** says "let them exercise hope-inspired endurance while they refrain from unjustly blaming those around them....With steady, unwavering patience endure all the wrongs that men may inflict upon you." We remember that James suffered martyrdom with such patience. As one brother urges on another, so James urges on his "brethren." ([James Commentary](#))

#### Related Resource:

- [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!"

**Be patient** (3114) **makrothumeo** from **makros** = long, distant, far off, large + **thumos** = temper, passion, emotion or **thumoomai** = to be furious or burn with intense anger; cf [makrothumia](#)) literally describes prolonged restraint of **thumos**, of emotion, anger or agitation. It means one's temper is long (as opposed to "short tempered) and does not give way to a short or quick temper toward those who fail. It describes holding out of the mind for a long time before it gives room to action or passion. The picture of this word is that of a person in whom it takes a long time before fuming and breaking into flames! **Trench** adds that this word refers to one who has the power to avenge himself and yet refrains from exercising this power. However that is not applicable to this passage in James. There folks do not seem to have the power to avenge themselves, but in context they can be absolutely certain that the [Avenger](#) (cf [ekdikos](#)) is coming and He will bring about just retribution!

**Hiebert** adds that **makrothumeo** "does not call for a passive resignation to one's fate but an attitude of self-restraint that enables

one to refrain from hasty retaliation in the face of provocation. The cognate noun is commonly rendered "longsuffering," which does not mean to suffer a while but to tolerate someone for a long time." ([James Commentary](#))

**Slow to anger** is a divine attribute (one which we all are eternally grateful for!). The Septuagint repeatedly uses the word makrothumos

Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, **slow to anger** (makrothumos) , and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; (Ex 34:6)

But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, **Slow to anger** (makrothumos) and abundant in lovingkindness and truth. (Ps 86:15)

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, **Slow to anger** (makrothumos) and abounding in lovingkindness. (Ps 103:8)

The LORD is gracious and merciful; **Slow to anger** (makrothumos) and great in lovingkindness. (Ps 145:8)

And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, **slow to anger** (makrothumos), abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil. (Joel 2:13+)

God calls us (in essence) to "imitate (present imperative) Him" (Eph 5:1<sup>±</sup>) and to exercise Spirit enabled (Gal 5:22<sup>±</sup>) **long-suffering** (slowness to anger) in the face of provocation and unjust treatment.

He who is **slow to anger** (makrothumos) has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly. (Pr 14:29)

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger**slow to anger** (makrothumos) calms a dispute. (Pr 15:18)

He who is **slow to anger** (makrothumos) is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city. (Pr 16:32)

He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit (makrothumos) is a man of understanding. (Pr 17:27)

The idea is to hold out in patience, being content to wait for deliverance by the Deliverer Himself! I love the encouraging song by Rich Mullins entitled "[My Deliverer is Coming](#)." Dear oppressed, mistreated child of the living God, listen to the words and let the Spirit revive your soul with the truth of **the coming of the Lord!** The time is short!

Joseph took his wife and her child and they went to Africa  
To escape the rage of a deadly king  
There along the banks of the Nile, Jesus listened to the song  
That the captive children used to sing  
They were singin'

My Deliverer is coming, my Deliverer is standing by  
My Deliverer is coming, my Deliverer is standing by

**POSB** has a good summary of this last section and how to have victory over trials - If we want victory over the temptations and trials of life, then we must combat them step by step. In particular, there are two steps that we must take. Step 1: Be Patient—Endure—Keep Your Eyes Focused Upon the Return of the Lord (Jas. 5:7–11). Step 2: Take Each Circumstance and Respond Properly (Jas. 5:12–20). (James 5:7–11) Introduction: the temptations and trials of life are terrible foes. If we give in to temptations they can enslave and destroy us before we know it. Temptations can hook us on the world and its possessions and pleasures or else they can destroy our wills, families, friendships, or jobs. The trials of life can unsettle and disrupt our lives, and if we are not on guard, they can crush us through some bad happening or accident, disease or death. How can we overcome temptations and trials—conquer and gain a permanent victory over them? There are two steps. The first step is covered in this passage: be patient—endure—keep your eyes focused upon the Lord's return. 1. Be patient, for the Lord is going to come again (Jas 5:7). 2. Be as patient as the farmer, for the Lord's coming is near (Jas 5:7–9). 3. Be as patient as the prophets in suffering, for they believed and spoke in the name of the Lord (Jas 5:10). 4. Be as patient as Job in suffering trials and temptations, for he saw the end of the Lord—that the Lord was full of compassion and mercy (Jas 5:11). ([Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible](#))

**Until** (only uses in James - used twice in Jas 5:7) - [See discussion of until](#) which is an **expression of time** and means something will continue to happen up to a point and then it will not happen because it is terminated by some other event or occurrence.

Synonyms of **until** include till, up to, up till, up to the time. **Until** in this context is an encouraging word, a word of hope, for it means that an end to the oppression will come when Christ returns at the [Second Coming](#) when He will make ALL THINGS RIGHT! Thus James uses this truth as an incentive to encourage them to be patient as they wait for the return of the Lord.

**The coming of the Lord** - The [parousia](#) gives us the proper perspective on our present persecutions! **The coming of the Lord** is our **hope**, not a "hope so" but a "hope sure" for Christian hope means the absolute assurance of future good, or the absolute assurance that God will do good to us in the future. And so other writers encourage their readers with this great truth.

**Peter** writes "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, [fix your hope](#) ([aorist imperative](#)) completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pe 1:13<sup>±</sup>)

**Paul** writes "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, [keep seeking](#) ([present imperative](#)) the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [Set your](#) ([present imperative](#)) mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth (INCLUDING OPPRESSION OR MISTREATMENT BY OTHERS). For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory." (Col 3:1-4<sup>±</sup>)

This **Lord** is the same One referred to earlier as the [Jehovah Sabaoth, the LORD of hosts](#), the Lord of the armies of Heaven. The **imminent** and certain return of the Lord Jesus has been the hope of every generation of believers since the first century. As Paul says in Titus 2:13<sup>±</sup> we are to be continually "[looking](#) (with anticipation, expectation) for the **Blessed Hope** (cf 1 Ti 1:1 = "Christ Jesus...our Hope") and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." The truth of the [Second Coming](#) is mentioned (directly or indirectly) in 1 of every 30 NT passages so clearly the Spirit wants the **Second Coming** to continually be on the "spiritual radar" of believers!

**APPLICATION** - GOD knows that what we are looking for will (or at least should) impact what we are living for. When was the last time you pondered the truth of the Lord's return? I like to refer to this as having [Vertical Vision](#). The point is that vertical vision will/should impact horizontal living (so to speak).

**QUOTE** - The primitive church thought more about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than about death or about heaven. The early Christians were looking not for a cleft in the ground called a grave but for a cleavage in the sky called Glory. They were watching not for the undertaker but for the Uppertaker. – Alexander Maclaren

**ILLUSTRATION** - Many years ago I heard a true story about Shepherd's Home for children with developmental disabilities where they taught that Jesus would save them and one day heal them of all disabilities. The director said that his biggest problem was **dirty windows** because the disabled children would press their hands, noses and lips against the windows always looking to see if today might be the day that Jesus would return for them and take them home where they will be healed of all their disabilities. Talk about having your priorities in the right place! Oh, to have the heart attitude of these precious little children! Amen!

In Revelation 19 John gives us a dramatic description of the Lord of Sabaoth's return which should encourage every saint of every age...

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And **the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.** (WHO COMPOSES THESE ARMIES? YOU BELOVED! THE SAINTS. AND ALSO LIKELY THE ANGELS.) 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev 19:11-16<sup>±</sup>)

**Coming** ([3952](#)) see discussion of [parousia](#) below.

**Lord** ([2962](#)) see note above on [kurios](#). **Kurios** is used 12 times in James - Jas. 1:1; Jas. 1:7; Jas. 2:1; Jas. 3:9; Jas. 4:10; Jas. 4:15; Jas. 5:4; Jas. 5:7; Jas. 5:8; Jas. 5:10; Jas. 5:11; Jas. 5:14;

Jesus is not only our [Kinsman-Redeemer](#) but w also our [Blood Avenger](#).

**THOUGHT** - If you have been oppressed like these believers in James, then this passage should be encouraging and give you assurance that Jesus will right the wrongs that have been committed against you. If you need further encouragement of the certainty of this just divine retribution, take some time and study the

**Related Resource:**

- [What is an avenger of blood in the Bible?](#)

**The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it-** **Waits** is in the [present tense](#), picturing the farmer continually waiting expectantly for his harvest, even as these tried and tested believers were being encouraged to wait for the Lord's return. So not only should they be encouraged by the fact that Jesus will return, but also by the fact that they will be rewarded for the "fruit" the Spirit has produced through their "[good deeds](#)." In his last letter to Timothy Paul encourages his disciple with a similar truth that...

The hard-working farmer ought ([dei](#) = must) to be the first to receive his share of the crops [karpos](#) = fruits). (2 Ti 2:6<sup>+</sup>)

**Adamson** notes that "The farmer awaiting the harvest is a familiar Jewish picture of salvation and the Last Judgment. Like the farmer the Christian must be patient and depend on God to consummate his purpose." (NICNT-James)

**Farmer** (1092)([georgos](#) from [ge](#) = the earth + [ergo](#) = to work) describes one who tills or works the soil or the ground and is here an independent landowner or a tenant farmer rather than a day laborer. A husbandman (one that plows and cultivates land).

**Waits** (1551)([ekdechomai](#) from [ek](#) = from + [dechomai](#) = receive kindly, accept deliberately and readily; related [prosdechomai](#)) means literally to receive or accept from some source. In this passage **ekdechomai** pictures the farmer remaining in as state of anticipation at the coming produce of his field. In context James is depicting believers eagerly awaiting the coming of Jesus Christ! "The compound verb "waits" (ekdechetai) conveys the thought of looking expectantly for something that comes to us from without; the farmer recognizes that the fruit is not simply the result of his own personal activity but is dependent on forces outside himself that he cannot control. The pious believer recognizes that the spiritual harvest that we anticipate also is dependent on the intervention of God in human affairs." (Hiebert)

**Hiebert** adds that "The anticipated crop, the produce of the soil, is valuable, that is, of great worth, because its production requires hard work, and, in part, the maintenance of physical life depends on it. The value of the harvest justifies his patient waiting." ([James Commentary](#))

**Being patient about it** - This is the same verb used above (see [makrothumeo](#)). Hiebert notes that makrothumeo here is "a [present](#) participle portraying his constant attitude of expectancy between seedtime and harvest, even when irregularities in the rainfall may create uncertainty."

**Until** - see [note on until](#) above. In the context of their suffering oppression by the rich, the idea is that this "dry" season will end and times of refreshing. Peter describes the **times of refreshing** in Acts 3:19-20+ calling on the Jews 'Therefore **repent** ([aorist imperative](#)) and **return** ([aorist imperative](#)), so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that **times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you.**" Nothing will grow without these rains and a farmer's impatience can do nothing to hurry them! So the farmer is a perfect illustration of how these suffering saints were to remain patient in their afflictions. So just as the farmer had to wait on God's time-table, so too the believers (including us) need to wait on God's time-table!

**Gregg Allen** makes the point that "We need to remember that for everything we actually see God doing, there are a myriad of other things - unseen to us - that He is also doing at the same time. When all the pieces are in place, we will see that all things - indeed - do work for good to those who love Him (Ro 8:28-29<sup>+</sup>); and that our patience will eventually pay off (2 Thess. 1:3-10)." ([The Hope that Makes us Strong - James 5:7-8](#))

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

**It gets the early and late rains** - **Early and late** describe the expected pattern of the winter and spring **rains** that occurred in Israel. And it is clear from the uses of **early** and **late** rains in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) ([see below](#)), that these rains were a gift from "the Father of lights in Whom there is no variation or shifting of shadow." (James 1:17<sup>+</sup>) as described especially Dt 11:14 and Jer 5:24. The point is that just as God had faithfully sent the rains to refresh Israel, so too He would be faithful to send His Son, Who Malachi refers to as "**the Sun of righteousness**" Who will arise "with healing in His wings." (Malachi 4:2+).

**Hiebert** - "The fall" rains, generally arriving in a series of thunderstorms, come in the latter part of October or in early November.

They are anxiously awaited by the farmer since they are necessary to soften the hard-baked soil for plowing and sowing. A serious delay of these rains diminishes the prospects for a crop; if they fail entirely, a crop failure results. The bulk of the rains come during December through February. The "latter," or "spring" rains fall during late April or May. These late rains, accompanied by warmer temperatures than in winter, are important for the maturing of the crops. The longer they continue, the greater the potential yield. ([James Commentary](#))

Beware of making this text an allegory or spiritualizing the meaning - There is no allegorical picture here of an early and a latter outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church.

**Late rains** ([3797](#)) (**opsimos** from **opse** = late) refers literally to a period of time that is relatively late. In context it describes the rain which falls in March through April, after the normal rains of the winter season have passed. These **late rains** occur just before the harvest, in contrast to the early rain which falls in October. **Opsimos** is used 7x in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) where it is translated late, late rain (Dt 11:4), latter rain (Joel 2:23) and most often **spring rain** (4x).

**Friberg on opsimos** - "late in the season; as a substantive o` o; the spring rain needed to swell out the grain before harvest, late rain, opposite pro,i?moj (early rain); in the Middle East, the November-to-April rainy season is threefold, marked by early rain (at planting time), (heavy) winter rain, and late rain." (Friberg)

**Gilbrant** - The "rain" which James described as **opsimos** is the "latter" or "final showers" of the Palestinian farming season. Different from the **early** ground-softening rains (October–December), these showers prepared the maturing fruits for harvest (February–April). They provided a refreshing moisture which ultimately increased the yield (cf. Exodus 9:32; Deuteronomy 11:14; Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23,24). Christ's return, then, was likened by James to the "latter" (later) rains. Just as the farmer patiently waits for his harvest made possible by the early and later rains, so the Christian must wait patiently for the return of Christ and consequently His reward.

**Late rains** in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) -

Exodus 9:32 But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined, for they ripen**late**.

Deuteronomy 11:14 that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and**late rain**, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil.

Proverbs 16:15 In the light of a king's face is life, And his favor is like a cloud with the**spring rain**.

Jeremiah 5:24 'They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain in its season, Both the autumn rain (EARLY RAINS) and the **spring rain** (LATE RAINS), Who keeps for us The appointed weeks of the harvest."

Hosea 6:3± "So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the **spring rain** watering the earth."

Joel 2:23+ So rejoice, O sons of Zion, And be glad in the LORD your God; For He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, The early and **latter rain** as before.

Zechariah 10:1 Ask rain from the LORD at the time of the**spring rain**— The LORD who makes the storm clouds; And He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field to each man.

**Latter Rain** is the rain of spring, שִׁירְתָּה, [malqowsh](#), Pr 16:15; Job 29:23; Jer 3:3; Hos 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zechariah 10:1; **Latter rain** in Septuagint = ετς ψιμος. [huetos opsimos] The early and latter rains are mentioned together Dt 11:14; Jer 5:24; Joel 2:23; Hos 6:3; Jas 5:7

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**Steven Cole** - One of the most important lessons to learn as a Christian is how to respond rightly when you are wronged. Count on it—you *will* be wronged! For some strange reason, newer Christians often have the notion that God will protect them from all wrongs. Everything seems to be going so well since they trusted in Christ. They're experiencing newfound joy and peace. Solutions to difficult problems seem to be coming together. It's great to be a Christian! Then, wham! Some difficult trial hits them broadside. They're falsely accused at work and even get fired. The person who lied about them gets promoted. It's just not fair! Or, a family member betrays them and spreads vicious gossip to other family members. Or, someone at church that they looked up to as an example disappoints them. They're shocked, angered, and confused. They wonder, "If someone like that failed, can I trust anyone?" In our text, James is showing us how to respond rightly when we're wronged. ([James 5:7-9 Responding Rightly When Wronged](#))

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**David Guzik** - When we think about it, the waiting and need for endurance we have in the Christian life is very much like the waiting of the farmer.

- He waits with a reasonable hope and expectation of reward.
- He waits a long time.
- He waits working all the while.
- He waits depending on things out of his own power; with his eye on the heavens.
- He waits despite changing circumstances and many uncertainties.
- He waits encouraged by the value of the harvest.
- He waits encouraged by the work and harvest of others.
- He waits because he really has no other option.
- He waits because it does no good to give up.
- He waits aware of how the seasons work.
- He waits because as time goes on, it becomes more important and not less to do so.

### James 5:8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

NET James 5:8 You also be patient and strengthen your hearts, for the Lord's return is near.

GNT James 5:8 μακροθυμησατε καὶ μετέχετε τοῦ Κυρίου, τοῦ οὐ γγίκεν.

NLT James 5:8 You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.

KJV James 5:8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

ESV James 5:8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

ASV James 5:8 Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

CSB James 5:8 You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, because the Lord's coming is near.

NIV James 5:8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

NKJ James 5:8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

NRS James 5:8 You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

YLT James 5:8 be patient, ye also; establish your hearts, because the presence of the Lord hath drawn nigh;

NAB James 5:8 You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand.

NJB James 5:8 You too must be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon.

GWN James 5:8 You, too, must be patient. Don't give up hope. The Lord will soon be here.

BBE James 5:8 Be as calm in your waiting; let your hearts be strong: because the coming of the Lord is near.

- **You too be patient:** Ge 49:18 Ps 37:7 40:1-3 130:5 La 3:25,26 Mic 7:7 Hab 2:3 Ro 8:25 Ga 5:22 1Th 1:10 2Th 3:5 Heb 10:35-37
- **Strengthen your hearts:** Ps 27:14
- **For the coming of the Lord is near:** Jas 5:9 Php 4:5 Heb 10:25-37 1Pe 4:7 Rev 22:20
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## COMMANDS FOR PATIENCE AND STRENGTH

**You too be patient** - The idea is **you too** like the farmer just mentioned. **Be patient** is a command in the [aorist imperative](#) which can only be obeyed by depending on supernatural power, the power provided by the indwelling Holy Spirit ([See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament! Enabled by the Spirit - Who gives the desire and power - Php 2:13NLT<sup>+</sup>), make the decision of your will every time you have a choice to have this attitude which can endure delay and bear suffering and never give up. Don't give way to a quick burst of temper toward those around you who fail or fall but be considerate and understanding toward them, holding off your mind (only possible as you are empowered by the Spirit) and not giving it room to take action or invoke passion. As discussed in the previous verse, the verb makrothumeo is the picture of a long fuse before the explosion! So take a long time before fuming and breaking into flames (in fact don't even start the fire). Isn't it fitting that Paul used [makrothumeo](#) to sum up the essence of love writing that "love is patient (continually - [present tense](#) - only possible enabled by the Spirit)." (1 Co 13:4<sup>+</sup>).

**Be patient** (3114) see note above on [makrothumeo](#).

**Strengthen your hearts** (2Th 2:17, 3:3, Ro1:11, 16:25, 1Th3:2 3:13 Ja 5:8 1Pe 5:10 2Pe1:12 Rev 3:2 Lu 22:32) - Williams paraphrases it, "You must put iron into your hearts!" **Strengthen** is [aorist imperative](#) calling for a decisive act to strengthen their inner spiritual life. It is again a call for them to rely on the Spirit to carry this out (see [explanation above](#)). This is NOT just "pull yourselves up by your bootstraps" as the saying goes! Strengthening paradoxically involves weakening of our self-confidence, of our trust in our ability to do anything we set our mind to do. That technique may work in some secular activities but it will be spiritually futile and lead to failure. When we are weak, then we are strong (2 Cor 12:10b<sub>+</sub>) is the paradoxical principle that the world scoffs at as absolute foolishness! In fact it is absolute wisdom! In context they will be motivated to obey this command by turning their gaze heavenward, contemplating the return of the Lord.

**Spurgeon** - When God shall give you a rich return for all you have done for him, you will blush to think you ever doubted; you will be ashamed to think you ever grew weary in his service. You shall have your reward. Not tomorrow, so wait: not the next day perhaps, so be patient. You may be full of doubts one day, your joys sink low. It may be rough windy weather with you in your spirit. You may even doubt whether you are the Lord's, but if you have rested in the name of Jesus, if by the grace of God you are what you are, if he is all your salvation, and all your desire, — have patience; have patience, for the reward will surely come in God's good time.

**Strengthen** (stand firm)(4741)[sterizo](#) from **histemi** = to stand means to make firm or solid, to cause to be inwardly firm or committed. The basic idea is that of stabilizing something by providing a support or buttress (a projecting structure of masonry or wood for supporting or giving stability to a wall or building), so that it will not totter.

**Hiebert** adds "The verb [sterizo](#) conveys the thought of strengthening and supporting something so that it will stand firm and immovable. Instead of feeling agitated and shaken up by their experiences of oppression, they must develop an inner sense of stability." ([James Commentary](#))

**Sterizo** - 14x in NT - Study some of these uses below to help understand how we can strengthen our hearts.

Luke 22:32 but I have prayed for you (PETER), that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, **strengthen** your brothers." (AND JESUS IS PRAYING FOR US THAT WE MIGHT BE STRONG TO OTHERS)

2 Thessalonians 2:17 (Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace,) comfort and **strengthen** your hearts in every good work and word. (A GOOD PRAYER TO PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER)

2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, and He will **strengthen** and protect you from the evil one. (COULD IT BE ANY CLEARER WHERE OUR SPIRITUAL STRENGTH COMES FROM?)

Romans 1:11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you **may be established** (strengthened);

Romans 16:25 Now to Him who is able (HAS THE INHERENT SUPERNATURAL POWER) to **establish** you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ (WE ARE STRENGTHENED AS WE INTERNALIZE THE GOSPEL, "PREACH IT TO OURSELVES" DAILY, ALONG WITH PREACHING CHRIST TO OURSELVES!), according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,

1 Thessalonians 3:2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to **strengthen** and encourage you as to your faith (DO YOU HAVE AN ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER GOD CAN USE TO STRENGTHEN YOU? THEN GET ONE!)

1 Peter 5:10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, **confirm** (STERIZO), strengthen and establish you. (SUFFERING IS THE REQUIRED COURSE IN WHICH WE ARE ALL ENROLLED, BUT THE "GRACE OF GOD" IS OUR TEACHER AND SUSTAINER.)

2 Peter 1:12 Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been **established** in the truth which is present with you. (WHERE IS THE SOURCE OF STRENGTH IN THIS VERSE? THE TRUTH. THE GOSPEL. THE TRUTHS WE HAVE HEARD AND STUDIED AND NEED TO BE REMINDED OF).

Revelation 3:2<sub>+</sub> **'Wake up** ([present imperative](#)) and **strengthen** ([aorist imperative](#)) the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. (JESUS COMMAND TO THE CHURCH. GOD'S COMMANDMENT ALWAYS IS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS

ENABLEMENT! HIS SPIRIT'S SUPERNATURAL STRENGTHENING).

As David says "Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD. (Ps 27:14)

**Hearts** (2588) see discussion above on [kardia](#). This strengthening is not by going to some self-improvement seminar, but by submitting to the Spirit's supernatural strengthening. Our responsibility is to read the Word of hope that Jesus' coming is [imminent](#) and the Spirit takes that truth and renews our mind (Eph 4:23<sup>±</sup>, Col 3:10<sup>±</sup>, 2 Cor 3:18<sup>±</sup>) and fortifies our heart with this sure truth. This Word increases our faith (Ro 10:17<sup>±</sup>) and then when the fiery arrows come flying into our mind we take up the shield of faith (Eph 6:16<sup>±</sup>) and extinguish them (all enabled by the Word and the Spirit Who gives life - Jn 6:63).

**Gregg Allen** comments that we are to **strengthen our hearts** by fixing our thoughts on the fact that the return of Jesus is near adding that "We do this by accepting that we will suffer injustice in this world (2 Ti 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-19). We also do this by deferring "vengeance" to God, and not seeking to take vengeance ourselves (Ro 12:17-21). We do this by submitting to God's sovereignty in the exercise of justice (2 Peter 3:3-9). And we do this by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus as our great example of hopeful patience in suffering (Hebrews 12:1-3)."

**Constable** - We should be patient and encouraged knowing that our reward lies ahead as God has promised (cf. Mt. 6:20<sup>±</sup>). The rich who behave as typical rich people either do not have or have lost sight of this hope. They live only to accumulate as much reward here and now as they can."The finish line is just ahead: the important point is not to give up now and lose all that for which one has already suffered."

The comment about the finish line reminds me of a warning by John

**Watch** ([present imperative](#)) yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. (2 John 1:8)

**Ryrie** - All believers will receive praise at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 4:5), but some will receive more rewards than others (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

**John MacArthur** adds that "Although a reward is generally promised Christians for hospitality (e.g., Mt 10:41; 25:40; Mk 9:41), the idea here is of the fullness of a believer's reward for all the good he has done (see 1Co 3:10-17; 2Co 5:9, 10). A loss of that reward may occur to any believer who does not discriminate fellowship on the basis of adherence to the truth (Col 2:18, 19; 3:24, 25). This is a potent warning. All the eternal reward one earns by seeing Christ purely, eagerly, and effectively in the Spirit can be diminished by any aiding or abetting of false teaching." (The MacArthur Study Bible)

## SPIRITUALLY ENERGIZED BY IMMINENCY

**Imminency** is from the Latin word **imminens** from **imminere** = to hang or project over. Imminence is the quality or condition of being about to occur. Literally, **imminent** means "hanging over one's head, ready to befall or overtake one; close at hand in its incidence." This gives us an incredible picture of something hanging over our heads, like a rock, and in this case it is the rock solid Bible truth of the return of Jesus. **A W Pink** explains that "When we say that the Redeemer's Return is an imminent event, we do not mean it will occur immediately, but that He may come back in our own lifetime, that He may come back this year; yet, we cannot say that He will do so." **Imminency** makes it impossible to know when He might come so the believer must remain constantly on the lookout in case the Lord were to return and find him unprepared (Mt. 24:43; Luke 12:37-39+; 1Th 4:15-17<sup>±</sup>; Rev. 3:3<sup>±</sup>).

**Reginald Showers** adds that " an imminent event is one that is always hanging overhead, is constantly ready to befall or overtake a person, is always close at hand in the sense that it could happen at any moment. Other things may happen before the imminent event, but nothing else must take place before it happens. If something else must take place before an event can happen, that event is not imminent. The necessity of something else taking place first destroys the concept of imminency....In light of the meaning of the term "**imminent**" and the fact that the next coming of Christ has not happened yet, we can conclude that the concept of the imminent coming of Christ is that His next coming is always hanging overhead, is constantly ready to befall or overtake us, is always close at hand in the sense that it could happen at any moment. Other things may happen before Christ's coming, but nothing else must happen before it takes place. If something else must happen before it can take place, then it is not imminent. The necessity of something else taking place first destroys the concept of the imminent coming of Christ....Because we do not know exactly when Christ will come, three things are true. **First**, we cannot count on a certain amount of time transpiring before Christ's coming; therefore, we should always be prepared for that event to happen at any moment. **Second**, we cannot legitimately set a date for Christ's coming. **Third**, we cannot legitimately say that Christ's coming will happen soon. Again, it may happen soon, but it does not have to in order to be imminent. Christians should have an expectant attitude toward Christ's coming (**Ed**: [see Greek Verbs](#)). Since it is imminent and therefore could happen at any moment, believers should constantly look forward to, look out for, or wait for that

event" ([Maranatha Our Lord, Come!](#) 1995)

**For the coming of the Lord is near- Is near** in the [perfect tense](#) means it has drawn near and continues to be near.

**Coming** ([3952](#))**(parousia)** is a combination of two Greek words **para** = with, alongside + **ousia** = being (**ousia** is the participial form of the verb **eimi** = to be) which together literally mean to be alongside. Most lexicons in fact state that **parousia** is derived from **pareimi** (from **para** = near, with + **eimi** = to be) which means to be present, to be nearby, to have come. **Parousia** then literally means a **being beside** or a **presence**. The word denotes both an arrival and a consequent presence with. **Parousia** conveys the thought of an arrival (advent or coming) of a person to a place plus the idea of their presence at that place until a certain event transpires. The word **parousia** has no English equivalent and therefore is often transliterated in writings.

**Parousia** was used to describe the arrival of an emperor or king and was also used to describe the invasion of a country by an army.

**Hiebert** on **parousia** - Papyrus usage shows that the term was common in secular Greek for a royal visit to a certain city or district. The term does occur in the Septuagint and was not used in connection with the Messiah until the time of Christ (Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39). **In the New Testament epistles it is one of the most frequently used terms for the return of Christ**(1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8; 2 Pet. 1:16; 3:4; 1 John 2:28). The term may have the sense of "coming" as denoting His arrival, but its fuller significance centers attention on His presence with His people as the result of His coming. Hendrickson remarks that the term denotes "his 'coming' in order to bless his people with his presence."...James has very little to say concerning the details of that eschatological hope, but for him it clearly was a hope that must have had a sanctifying impact on daily life. ([James Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** - **Parousia** refers to more than just coming; it includes the idea of **presence**." Perhaps the best English translation would be **"arrival."** The church's great hope is the arrival of Jesus Christ when He comes to bless His people with His presence. That glorious truth appears in more than 500 verses throughout the Bible. ([James Commentary](#))

**Parousia** - 24x in 24v in the NT (none in non-apocryphal [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#)

Mt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor 15:23; 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6f; 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Th 2:1, 8, 9; Jas 5:7, 8; 2 Pe 1:16; 3:4, 12; 1 Jn 2:28

#### Related Resources:

- [Imminency, Imminent - Christ's Second Coming](#)
- [Table comparing Rapture vs Second Coming](#)
- [Imminent/Imminency](#)
- [Maranatha](#)

**Henry Morris** - In fact, the great "judge standeth before the door," as it were (James 5:9; Revelation 3:20; Mark 13:29). Even though a great majority of Christian believers in every nation are among those of whom the rich have taken unjust advantage, the Lord would advise prayerful patience rather than rebellion and retribution. He will make all things right when He comes in judgment.

**Lord** ([2962](#)) see note above on **kurios**. **Kurios** is used 12 times in James - Jas. 1:1; Jas. 1:7; Jas. 2:1; Jas. 3:9; Jas. 4:10; Jas. 4:15; Jas. 5:4; Jas. 5:7; Jas. 5:8; Jas. 5:10; Jas. 5:11; Jas. 5:14;

**Is near** ([1448](#))**(eggizo)** means to draw closer to, draw near (**in space** - Mt 21:1, Mk 11:1) and in this context refers to drawing near **in time** as in Lk 22:1+ which says "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, **was approaching**." The first two uses of **eggizo** in the NT are identical, the first by John the Baptist and the second by Jesus "**Repent** ([metanoeo](#) in **present imperative** - make this your lifestyle, only possible as enabled by Spirit, of Ro 2:4<sup>+</sup>), for the kingdom of heaven is **at hand** ([eggizo](#) = one sense kingdom is present reality as King is present, but awaits a yet-future fulfillment = "[already, not yet](#)")." (Mt 3:2; Mt 4:17).

**Hiebert** - "**Is near**" (enggiken) renders the [perfect tense](#), "has come near," and thus is at hand. It implies that the **parousia** is near but has not actually arrived. Whereas Christ's presence is now mediated to His saints through the Holy Spirit, His bodily presence with them is still a matter of the future. His statement here leaves no doubt that James, like Paul, Peter, and John (Phil. 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 John 2:18), looked for the personal return of Jesus Christ as imminent. And this attitude of expectancy was in keeping with the attitude that Christ had inculcated (Mark 13:32-37). The Lord had instructed His followers to be ready and watching; if they had believed that He would not return until centuries later, there would have been no occasion or need to watch for His return. "The Lord had laid it upon His people not only to believe, but to watch; not only to love, but to watch; not only to obey, but to watch;... and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost they were in this state of mind." But it is "wrong to assert that they were certain that they would live to see the Parousia; they were no more certain of it than we are today." ([James Commentary](#))

Jesus use of **eggizo** in Luke 21:28+ is especially appropriate to the present context (speaking of the [parousia](#)) for He declares

"But when these things begin to take place (He is referring in essence to the incredible events that will transpire during [Daniel's Seventieth Week](#)), **straighten up** ([anakupto](#) in [aorist imperative](#)) and **lift up** ([epairo](#) in [aorist imperative](#)) your heads, because your redemption (**ED**: YOUR REDEEMER'S RETURN) is **drawing near** ([eggizo](#))."

**John MacArthur** explains that Jesus is referring to "The dreadful tribulations (**ED**: e.g., [Great Tribulation](#)) and signs that mark the [last days](#) (which will be) a cause of great expectation, joy, and triumph for the true believer (and) **redemption** refers to the final fullness of redemption (**ED**: [glorification](#)), when the redeemed are reunited with Christ forever." (MacArthur Study Bible)

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**C H Spurgeon on James 5:8** - THE last word in the Canticle of love is, "Make haste, my beloved," and among the last words of the Apocalypse we read, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come"; to which the heavenly Bridegroom answers, "Surely I come quickly." Love longs for the glorious appearing of the Lord, and enjoys this sweet promise—"The coming of the Lord draweth nigh." This stays our minds as to the future. We look out with hope through this window. This sacred "window of agate" lets in a flood of light upon the present, and puts us into fine condition for immediate work or suffering.

- Are we tried? Then the nearness of our joy whispers patience.
- Are we growing weary because we do not see the harvest of our seed-sowing? Again this glorious truth cries to us, "Be patient."
- Do our multiplied temptations cause us in the least to waver? Then the assurance, that before long the Lord will be here, preaches to us from this text, "Establish your hearts." Be firm, be stable, be constant, "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (1 Cor 15:58<sup>+</sup>)

Soon will you hear the silver trumpets which announce the coming of your King. Be not in the least afraid. Hold the fort, for he is coming; yea, he may appear this very day.

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### Cheering Each Other On

Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. —Hebrews 10:24

Today's Scripture:Hebrews 10:19-25

A mile from the finish line of the London Marathon, thousands of onlookers holding signs lined the route. When spectators spotted a family member or friend coming into view, they shouted the person's name, waved, and yelled encouragement: "Just a little farther! Keep going! You're almost there." After running 25 miles, many competitors were barely walking and ready to quit. It was amazing to watch exhausted runners brighten and pick up the pace when they saw someone they knew or heard their name called out.

Encouragement! We all need it, especially in our walk of faith. The book of Hebrews tells us to keep urging each other on. "Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, . . . but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (10:24-25).

The New Testament is filled with the certainty that Christ will return soon. "The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:5). **'The coming of the Lord is at hand'** (James 5:8). "Behold, I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22:12).

As we "see the Day approaching," let's keep cheering each other on in the faith. "Keep going! You're almost there! The finish line is in sight."By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### Reflect & Pray

Help me, Lord, to reassure and strengthen  
Others by the words I speak today;  
I would always try to be affirming,  
As our pathways cross along life's way. —Hess

Even if you have nothing else to give, you can give encouragement.

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### It's Late!

Read: Titus 2:11-15

Little children, it is the last hour. —1 John 2:18

A young boy was playing in his grandmother's house near a large grandfather clock. Noontime was approaching, and when both hands of the old timepiece reached 12, the chimes began to ring.

As he always liked to do, the boy counted each gong as it sounded. This time, however, something went wrong with the clock's inner mechanism. Instead of stopping at 12, it kept right on chiming—13, 14, 15, 16 times.

The boy couldn't believe his ears! He jumped to his feet and ran into the kitchen, shouting, "Grandma! Grandma! It's later than it's ever been before!" In his excitement, the youngster expressed a truth we all would do well to consider.

It is later than it's ever been before—in the history of the world, in the days allotted to man, and on God's calendar of events. With each passing hour, the words of James 5:8 take on added significance: "The coming of the Lord is at hand."

This fact is both comforting and sobering. It is reassuring to know that the day our Savior will come for us may be near. But at the same time, we must honestly ask ourselves, "Am I living in a way that will bring His commendation?" Think about it!

Remember, "It's later than it's ever been before!" By Richard DeHaan [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI.](#)  
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May I live so that I will be ready

With joy my Savior to meet,

And feel no alarm at His coming

But hasten His heralds to greet.

—Anon.

Be ready for the last moment by being ready at every moment.

**James 5:9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.**

NET James 5:9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be judged.  
See, the judge stands before the gates!

GNP James 5:9 μ στεν ζετε, δελφο , κατ λλ λων να μ κριθ τε· δο κριτς πρ τ ν θυρ ν στηκεν.

NLT James 5:9 Don't grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look-- the Judge is standing at the door!

KJV James 5:9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

ESV James 5:9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

ASV James 5:9 Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the judge standeth before the doors.

CSB James 5:9 Brothers, do not complain about one another, so that you will not be judged. Look, the judge stands at the door!

NIV James 5:9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

NKJ James 5:9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

NRS James 5:9 Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors!

YLT James 5:9 murmur not against one another, brethren, that ye may not be condemned; lo, the Judge before the door hath stood.

NAB James 5:9 Do not complain, brothers, about one another, that you may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates.

NJB James 5:9 Do not make complaints against one another, brothers, so as not to be brought to judgement yourselves; the Judge is already to be seen waiting at the gates.

GWN James 5:9 Brothers and sisters, stop complaining about each other, or you will be condemned. Realize that the judge is standing at the door.

BBE James 5:9 Say no hard things against one another, brothers, so that you will not be judged; see, the judge is waiting at the doors.

- **Do not complain**, Jas 4:11 Lev 19:18 Ps 59:15 Mk 6:19 2Co 9:7 Ga 5:14,26 1Pe 4:9
- **so that you yourselves may not be judged** Mt 6:14,15 Mt 7:1,2
- **the Judge is standing right at the door**.Ge 4:7 Mt 24:33 1Co 4:5 10:11 Rev 3:20
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## NO GRIPING

To **gripe** means to express complaints, discontent, displeasure, or unhappiness. Considering the context of James 5:1-6 and their oppression by the rich, it would be easy to moan and groan about their state. So here James warns against the natural tendency of the afflicted to unjustly blame those around them. As discussed below James is addressing that griping spirit that we all tend to manifest when we are experiencing a protracted trial of our patience (as these brethren were experiencing).

The Devil's tactic is ever to divide and conquer. He did a good job with Adam and Eve, dividing them from God and then causing Adam to accuse Eve! **Diabolos** is from **dia** - through and **ballo** - throw so you get the picture of his tactic of throwing between and thus dividing. Beloved, look out because he has had a lot of practice. Of course the saints had the internal enemy of the fallen flesh, which does not even need the devil's coercion! In any event the devil seeks to get Christians fighting with one another, for he knows that then he can defeat them. James has already warned believers to "Get along!" - "Do not speak against one another, brethren." (James 4:11+)

**ESV Study Bible** note - It can be particularly painful in times of suffering when people explode in frustration and turn upon each other.

**Do not complain** (ESV = grumble; ASV = murmur)[\(4727\)](#) (**stenazo**) means to sigh or groan either inwardly to ourselves or outwardly because of undesirable circumstances or oppression under which the individual suffers. It then means express discontent or complain. "Whereas the primary reference is to the inner feeling of dissatisfaction and personal irritation at another, rather than the expression of loud and bitter complaints, it involves a feeling of criticism and faultfinding directed against others. This personal feeling reflects itself in smoldering resentment that may display itself in an antagonistic expression of bitter groans." (Hiebert)

James uses the **present imperative with a negative** which means either stop doing this (that it was already taking place) or do not let it begin. Complaining must be stopped for this fleshly spirit threatens the unity of the body. This sounds very close to Paul's command in Php 2:14± to "Do (present imperative) - continually) all things without grumbling or disputing." I wish Paul had omitted the adjective "**ALL**." We can all do fairly well on a **FEW** things but **ALL** is impossible, even as cessation of complaining is impossible if we attempt to do obey these commands by depending on our own strength. We can't not complain. We can't not grumble. That is the forte of our fallen flesh. Therefore we have to daily submit to the Spirit to "be (continually) filled" and controlled by Him so that we can then "walk by the Spirit" for only in that way will we "not carry out the desires of our fallen flesh." (Gal 5:16+). Are you filled? Are you walking in His power? Or are you complaining at church and against your brothers and sisters in Christ? If it is the latter action , then rest assured that you are grieving the Spirit (Eph 4:30±) and are not cultivating and harvesting (so to speak) the fruit of the the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23+)! The basic question is "Who is in control -- self or Spirit?" You can discern by your attitudes and actions and if it is the flesh (self) then confess (1 Jn 1:9±) and do a spiritual 180 by repenting. As Proverbs 28:13± says "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." You will "find (divine) compassion" and divine fruit in your life and God will be greatly glorified!

The Jews had a writing that said that he "who accuses his neighbor will himself be punished." (Rosh Hashana 16b)

**Brethren, against one another** - Brethren again emphasizes his concern for his fellow believers, even as he is now giving them a stern warning to stop complaining. The word for **against** is the preposition **kata** which is used figuratively in this context and means *against in a hostile sense*, similar to its use in 1 Pe 2:11± where "fleshly lusts which (continually) wage war **against** (**kata**) the soul."

**Hiebert** adds that James "is not unsympathetic toward them amid their trying circumstances, which tend to make them irritable. But

he is concerned about eliminating their tendency to grow sullen and exasperated "against each other" ... The warning is against the human tendency-when subjected to oppression and injustice-to give way to vexations by unjustly lashing out against those near and dear." In other words the brethren are not complaining against their rich oppressors but are vulnerable to irritability and complaining against each other because of the ongoing oppression by the rich.

To walk above with saints we love,  
That will indeed be glory;  
To walk below with saints we know-  
Well, that's another story!

**So that** (*hina*) always introduces a [purpose clause](#) begging question "What purpose?" He will warn them of a result that would be best to be avoided!

**You yourselves may not be judged**- Who does James sound like here? His half brother Jesus of course Who commanded **Do not judge** ([present imperative with a negative](#)) = Stop doing this! Only way to obey is by continually relying on [the Holy Spirit to obey](#) so that you will not be judged. "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you." (Mt 7:1-2<sup>±</sup>, cp Lk 6:37+)

As Paul says "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (AND CLEARLY COMPLAINING WOULD BE BAD)." (2 Cor 5:10<sup>±</sup>)

Earlier **James** had said "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment." (James 2:12-13+)

And in chapter 4 James gives another warning regarding judgment of others declaring "There is only one Lawgiver and **Judge**, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who **judge** your neighbor?". (James 4:12+)

**Paul** alludes to the problem of judging others in Romans 14 and, as in the warning by James, it is associated with an allusion to the fact that we shall all stand before Jesus....and it could be sooner than we think!

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat ([bema](#)) of God. (Romans 14:10<sup>±</sup>, of 2 Cor 5:10<sup>±</sup>)

**Behold** ([2400](#)) (*idou*) is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of eidon which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT *idou* is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. **Idou** in the [middle voice](#) means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The [aorist imperative](#) is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!" The idea is listen carefully -- I am going to say something very important! **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

## HERE COMES THE JUDGE!

**The Judge is standing right at the door**- Who is the **Judge**? The Lord Jesus Christ. James is not so much calling their attention to the location of the Judge as to figuratively depict the imminent return of the Judge! This truth should stir their consciences and motivate them to stop complaining. It is interesting that James had just alluded to the imminent return of Christ to comfort the church, but now uses the same truth to warn the church!

This warning reminds me of the the description by John

Now, little children, **abide** ([present imperative](#)) only possible as we rely on the supernatural power of [the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming ([parousia](#)). (1 John 2:28<sup>±</sup>)

One is also reminded of Paul's exhortation to holy living in view of the imminence of Christ's return

Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 The night is almost gone, and the day is near (OF CHRIST' RETURN) Therefore let us **lay aside the deeds of darkness** and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife

and jealousy. 14 But put on ([aorist imperative](#)) the Lord Jesus Christ, and **make no provision** ([present imperative with a negative](#)) for the flesh in regard to its lusts. (Ro 13:11-14<sup>+</sup>)

There are several similar descriptions in the New Testament. **Paul** warns young Timothy writing

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, Who IS (MELLO) **to judge** the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom." (2 Ti 4:1<sup>+</sup>)

**Comment** - Notice the little verb "IS" which in English does not convey that much meaning. But in the original Greek the little verb "IS" ([mello](#)) actually means something is at the point of occurring. We might say it is [imminent](#). It is looming. The Latin word that gives rise to "imminent" is [imminere](#) which means "overhanging." Do you get a sense of the picture Paul is painting? Paul is saying "Jesus is **about to come** to Judge everyone and this judgement is [imminent](#)."

If we really believe that Jesus' return to Judge the living and the dead is [imminent](#) ("right at the door") and could occur at any time, it would stir in our hearts a sense of [URGENCY](#) and NECESSITY TO PROCLAIM, TEACH AND LIVE OUT THE WORD (cf Paul's charge to Timothy and all preachers in 2 Ti 4:2<sup>±</sup> in light of the truths of 2 Ti 4:1<sup>+</sup>) while there is still time. Even Jesus alluded to this sense of urgency when He declared "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work." (John 9:4)

[S Lewis Johnson](#) adds John 9:4 is "a good text for us who are believers [and still breathing]! It's important for us to remember, whether young or old, that **we have just one opportunity to be faithful to our Lord, to accomplish things for Him**. And it is NOW. This is our opportunity. And incidentally, if your life is almost up humanly speaking, He still has a purpose for you. You're here for a purpose, and the purpose is that in your life you may glorify Him. It's all optimism as long as you're breathing. God evidently has a distinct purpose for you."

And again Paul writes (keep in mind these are some of his last words - look what he is placing emphasis upon!)

"in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." (2 Ti 4:8<sup>+</sup>)

Jesus gives a similar warning in the context of the [Great Tribulation](#), right before He returns to make all things right!

"So, you too, when you see all these things, **recognize** ([present imperative](#)) that **He is near, right at the door.**" (Mt 24:33<sup>±</sup>, cf Mk 13:29+)

The apostle **John** writes

"For not even the Father judges anyone, but **He has given all judgment to the Son..** 27 and **He gave Him (JESUS) authority to execute judgment**, because He is the Son of Man." (John 5:22, 27)

**'Behold, I stand at the door** and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. (Rev 3:20<sup>±</sup>)

**Standing** is in the [perfect tense](#) picturing Jesus as still standing there, every ready to return. **Standing** is an interesting description for we know that He is seated at the right hand of His Father (Heb 1:3, Heb 10:12, Heb 12:2) The description in Heb 12:2 is that Jesus "has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God," where "**sat down**" is in also in the [perfect tense](#) which speaks of continuing effect. I am not sure how to resolve this except to suggest that standing right at the door is a figurative expression which conveys the sense of His imminent return.

In sum **standing right at the door** signifies that Jesus' judgment is [imminent](#). All that has to happen is for the door to "open" and Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead! There used to be a common phrase used in jest "Here come da' judge." James is not jesting! We all need to get our lives in order, asking God to search our heart for blind spots (Ps 139:23-24), confessing, repenting and walking in the Spirit for the glory of the Lord.

**Rod Mattoon** - George Bernard Shaw said when he was 19 years old, "Our conduct is influenced not so much by our experiences, but by our expectations." Martin Luther said, "I preach as though Christ died yesterday, arose from the dead today, and is coming back tomorrow." Do you look for the return of the Lord today? What are your expectations? Jesus told us to occupy until He returns. This was His challenge to us. God help us all to serve Him until He returns or until we meet Him in death. May we live, looking up! (Mattoon's Treasures from James)

As **Robert Moffatt** said "We have all eternity to celebrate our victories but one short hour before sunset in which to win them."

Missionary [\*\*Adoniram Judson\*\*](#) spoke one of my favorite quotes

"A life once spent is irrevocable. It will remain to be contemplated through eternity... If it has been a useless life, it can never be improved. Such will stand forever and ever. The same may be said of each day. When it is once past, it is gone forever. All the marks which we put upon it, it will exhibit forever... Each day will not only be a witness of our conduct, but will affect our everlasting destiny (**Note:** Not in loss of salvation but of rewards - cp 1Co 3:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, Jn 15:5, 2Co 5:10<sup>+</sup>, cp 1Ti 4:7, 8<sup>+</sup>). No day will lose its share of influence in determining where shall be our seat in heaven. How shall we then wish to see each day marked with usefulness! It will then be too late to mend its appearance. It is too late to mend the days that are past. The future is in our power. **Let us, then, each morning, resolve to send the day into eternity in such a garb as we shall wish it to wear forever.** And at night let us reflect that one more day is irrevocably gone, indelibly marked." (See page 33-34 of [A memoir of the life and labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson](#))

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#### James 5:10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

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NET James 5:10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the Lord's name.

GNT James 5:10 π δειγμα λ βετε, δελφο , τ ο κακοπαθ ας κα τ ο μακροθυμ ας το ο προφ τας ο λ λησαν ν τ ν ματι κυρ ου.

NLT James 5:10 For examples of patience in suffering, dear brothers and sisters, look at the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

KJV James 5:10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

ESV James 5:10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

ASV James 5:10 Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord.

CSB James 5:10 Brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the Lord's name as an example of suffering and patience.

NIV James 5:10 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

NKJ James 5:10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.

NRS James 5:10 As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

YLT James 5:10 An example take ye of the suffering of evil, my brethren, and of the patience, the prophets who did speak in the name of the Lord;

NAB James 5:10 Take as an example of hardship and patience, brothers, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

NJB James 5:10 For your example, brothers, in patiently putting up with persecution, take the prophets who spoke in the Lord's name;

GWN James 5:10 Brothers and sisters, follow the example of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. They were patient when they suffered unjustly.

BBC James 5:10 Take as an example of pain nobly undergone and of strength in trouble, the prophets who gave to men the words of the Lord.

- **As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience:** 2Ch 36:16 Jer 2:30 Mt 5:11,12 21:34-39 23:34-37 Lu 6:23 13:34 Ac 7:52 1Th 2:14,15 Heb 11:32-38
- **take the prophets who spoke:** Isa 39:8 Jer 23:22 26:16 Ac 3:21 Heb 13:7
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## EXAMPLES OF PATIENCE IN FACE OF SUFFERING

To further encourage the afflicted saints, James directs their attention to the godly examples of OT men who suffered and patiently endured. The writer of Hebrews takes a similar approach in his exhortation to his suffering and wavering Jewish readers

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the **full assurance of hope** (NOTE: HOPE IS ASSOCIATED WITH FULL ASSURANCE) until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and **patience** (*makrothumia*) inherit the promises. (Heb 6:11-12<sup>+</sup>)

**Comment** - "So we can define hope, in the New Testament sense, as **full assurance**, or strong confidence that God is going to do good to us in the future." (John Piper) See also [Steven Cole's comment on example below](#).

The OT is profitable for our spiritual steadfastness (James has just commanded the believers to "strengthen your hearts"). Along that same theme Paul wrote

For whatever was written in earlier times (OLD TESTAMENT) was written **for our instruction**, (WHY?) so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4<sup>+</sup>)

Now these things happened (IN THE OLD TESTAMENT) as **examples** for us, (WHY?) so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.....11 Now these things happened (OT) to them as an **example**, and they were written **for our instruction**, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Cor 10:6,11)

**Comment** - Notice the repetition of for our instruction and example, and here James gives the saints the example of Job. In fact at this time most likely the only Bible the saints had was the Old Testament!

**As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience** - Note that James is directing his charge to the **brethren**, the believers. **Patience** is a part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22<sup>+</sup>), which clearly calls for the brethren to daily seek to be Spirit filled (Eph 5:18<sup>+</sup>). As an aside do not think if you serve the Lord faithfully, you will be free of trials and spiritual attacks. In fact you can count on suffering for Jesus (cf Php 1:29<sup>±</sup>, 2 Ti 3:12<sup>+</sup>) The prophets suffered because they spoke in the Name of Jehovah, and if you speak in the Name of the Lord, you too will be persecuted for Christ.

**Steven Cole** quips "The Old Testament is given for our instruction—read it! Once in my church in California, I was referring to the Old Testament story of how the godly King Hezekiah took the Assyrian King Sennacherib's threatening letter and spread it out before the Lord in prayer. As I spoke, it was obvious to me that many were clueless about this story that occurs not just once, but three times in the Old Testament. I stopped and asked for a show of hands to find out how many were not familiar with this story. I was shocked when about a third of the hands went up! I'm still amazed at how many Christians have never read the Old Testament. ([James 5:10-11 Patient Endurance](#))

**Example** ([5262](#)) (**hypodeigma**) from **hupo** = under + **deiknúo/deíknumi** = to show, to point to something, to make known the character or significance of something) means literally that which is shown below. It means an example, pattern, illustration. It refers to a sign suggestive of anything, an outline, a delineation, a suggestion. **Barclay** writes that *hypodeigma* means "a specimen, or, still better, a sketch-plan.

**Hiebert** on **example** - James knew the value of an "example" (*hypodeigma*), an objective illustration that we can hold before us as a model to spur one to pursue the conduct desired. Though an example may be negative, showing us what not to do (Heb. 4:11; 2 Pet. 2:6), James here stresses the positive value of a good example. The term is emphatic as the first word in the sentence. ([James Commentary](#))

**Suffering** (only here in NT) ([2552](#)) (**kakopatheia**) from **kakos** = bad, evil + **pathos** = passion, that which befalls one, cf verb [kakopatheo](#)) describes evil circumstances coming on someone causing suffering, affliction, misery, misfortune. (Only other use is in the LXX of Malachi 1:13<sup>+</sup>). Also has the sense of facing evil circumstances courageously with perseverance, endurance. Thus it describes here in James suffering that a person endures, a strenuous effort that one makes, or perseverance. This suffering is to provide an example for the believers to be encouraged by and to imitate in the power of the Holy Spirit. The writer of Hebrews made a similar exhortation to those Jews who were beginning to believe in Messiah and who were beginning to experience suffering (cf Hebrew 10:32-39<sup>±</sup>).

**Patience** (longsuffering) ([3115](#)) (**makrothumia**) from **makros** = long, distant, far off, large + **thumos** = temper, **passion**, emotion or **thumoomai** = to be furious or burn with intense anger) is literally long-temper (as opposed to "short tempered"), a long holding out of the mind before it gives room to action or passion. It describes a state of emotional calm or quietness in the face of provocation,

misfortune or unfavorable circumstances. **Makrothumia** is the capacity to be wronged and not retaliate. It is the ability to hold one's feeling in restraint or bear up under the oversights and wrongs afflicted by others without retaliating. It is manifest by the quality of forbearance under provocation. It is used of God's patience toward sinful men (see note [Romans 2:4](#)) and of the attitude which Christians are to display.

**Hiebert** says **makrothumia** "points to their brave endurance and steadfastness under affliction without succumbing." [James Commentary](#)

Patience is the spirit which never gives up for it endures to the end even in times of adversity, exhibiting self-restraint such that it does not hastily retaliate a wrong. Vine says **makrothumia** is the opposite of anger. It follows that a lack of patience often leads to wrath or revenge.

**Guzik** - Among these prophets, Jeremiah is one example of someone who endured mistreatment with patience. He was put in the stocks (Jeremiah 20:2), thrown into prison (Jeremiah 32:2), and lowered into miry dungeon (Jeremiah 28:6). Yet he persisted in his ministry.

**Matthew Poole** - As much as God honoured and loved them, yet they were not exempted from afflictions, but were maligned, traduced, and persecuted by men, 1 Kings 18:13; 19:14; 2 Kings 6:31; Amos 7:10; Hebrews 11; and therefore when they suffered such hard things, it is no shame for you to suffer the like, Matthew 5:12.

**Steven Cole on the prophets** - I recently read through Jeremiah, who is certainly an example of suffering and patience. I can't imagine preaching all of your life, as Jeremiah did, with only negative responses to your ministry. It's hard enough to take occasional negative comments about a sermon, or to see people walk away from your ministry from time to time. When that happens, you tend to question yourself, to make sure that your heart is right before God and that your message is faithful to His Word. But if you only had negative responses, year in and year out, it would be tough to keep going. But Jeremiah kept proclaiming God's truth. In addition to the negative responses, Jeremiah also suffered physical persecution. He was beaten, put in the stocks, imprisoned, and thrown into a muddy cistern. He had to contend with false prophets who told the people what they wanted to hear, which was directly opposite to Jeremiah's message that they needed to hear. To the very end, Jeremiah's audience brazenly rejected his message, calling him a liar (see Jeremiah 42:1-43:13)! Yet in spite of all of these setbacks, as he saw Jerusalem in smoldering ruins, Jeremiah could write the amazing words (La 3:22-24), "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'Therefore I have hope in Him.'" Like the psalmist, Jeremiah knew that if God is your portion, you have it all, though you have nothing else. Read the Old Testament and learn patient endurance from the prophets. ([James 5:10-11 Patient Endurance](#))

**Take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord**- To speak in the name of the Lord signifies with His inspiration and authorization as His designated messenger. The prophets spoke as representatives of the Lord which is why they were persecuted. James is saying take these examples and place them before your mind's eye for your edification and encouragement when you experience suffering.

In his bold sermon before the angry Jewish audience the "prophet" Stephen declared

You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. 52 **"Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?** They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; (Acts 7:51-52+).

**Comment** - Stephen's audience did not take or receive Stephen's words and stoned him, giving an extreme example of persecution.

**Take (2983)(lambano)** means literally to take or grasp. In the present context **lambano** is used figuratively meaning **to take** to oneself, to one's mind, James' reference to the OT prophets accepting their words as authoritative, true and accurate and letting them guide them and encourage them.

**Jesus** alludes to the **example of the prophets** several times...

"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. **"Rejoice (present imperative)** and **be glad (present imperative)**, for your reward in heaven is great; for **in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you** (Mt 5:11-12+)

"Therefore, behold, I am sending you **prophets** and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, (Mt 23:34+)

"For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them

they will kill and some they will persecute, (Lk 11:49+)

**Prophets** (4396) ([prophete](#)) from **próphemi** = tell beforehand from **pró** = before, forth + **phemí** = speak, tell) is primarily a forth-teller or one who speaks out God's message (cf in His Name), primarily to their own generation, usually always calling the people to God's truth for them at that moment, often using the phrase "Thus saith the Lord." "As distinct from the sacral figures of pagan antiquity the biblical prophet is not a magician. He does not force God. On the contrary, he is under divine constraint. It is God Who invites, summons, and impels him--e.g., Jer 20:7" (Lamorte and Hawthorne)

Take Jeremiah, for example. God called him as a teenager in a small town. After he preached his first sermon, his family attacked him. After preaching in Jerusalem, the religious establishment persecuted him. He was beaten, thrown into prison, and dumped into a muddy cistern to die. Yet Jeremiah endured. The prophets weren't some race of super-men. They were human, yet they learned to accept suffering with a persevering dependence. (See Ro 15:4+)

**Lord** (2962) see note above on [kurios](#). **Kurios** is used 12 times in James - Jas. 1:1; Jas. 1:7; Jas. 2:1; Jas. 3:9; Jas. 4:10; Jas. 4:15; Jas. 5:4; Jas. 5:7; Jas. 5:8; Jas. 5:10; Jas. 5:11; Jas. 5:14;

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**Timothy Beougher** - New England preacher Phillips Brooks was known for his poise under pressure, but close friends knew he struggled with impatience. One day a friend, seeing him pacing, asked, "What's the trouble, Dr. Brooks?" The great preacher replied: "The trouble is that I'm in a hurry, but God isn't!"....There is much injustice in the world today. The Bible tells us that God will not settle all wrongs in the world till Christ returns. Therefore we're to patiently endure. To do that, we must:

- [Meditate](#) on the [sovereignty of God](#). Impatience is an implicit denial of the sovereignty of God.
- [Meditate](#) on the certainty of [Christ's return](#).
- Reflect on the consequences of impatience.
- If it involves another person, remember that you're of like nature. Reflect on your own weakness; it will make your ability to be patient more effective.

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**Steven Cole on Christian Biographies** (I COMPLETELY AGREE THAT SOME OF THE BEST CHRISTIAN WRITINGS I HAVE READ HAVE NOT BEEN THEOLOGY BOOKS BUT CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHIES WHERE YOU CAN SEE FLESH AND BLOOD PUT ON THE BARE BONES OF THEOLOGY - DON'T MISUNDERSTAND. THEOLOGY IS GOOD BUT BIOGRAPHIES ARE ALSO WORTH READING. SEE LINK ON PRECEPTAUSTIN - [Christian Biography](#)) -

Church history is given for our instruction—read it! Someone has said that if you are ignorant of history, you are doomed to repeat its mistakes. Knowing the history of the church and the lives of the great men and women in church history will help you immensely! Overall, I've grown more spiritually through reading Christian biographies than from any other source. I have an article on the church web site, "Mining for Gold," that goes into more detail than I can here, but here are four lessons that I have learned from reading the giants of the past.

\*First, Christian biographies have given me a sense of my spiritual heritage. It helps me to put our times and my own circumstances in perspective. It reminds me of the price that others have paid (often with their blood) to hand the torch of the gospel to me, and that I must hand it off faithfully to the next generation.

\*Second, Christian biographies give me great examples to follow. When I see how faithful men in the past stood firm in the midst of controversy or persecution, how they held firmly to God's Word when under fire, it encourages me to do the same.

\*Third, Christian biographies give me theological perspective and balance. We all tend to be more influenced by our time and culture than we are aware. This was also true of the men from the past, but they were in a different time and culture. So they often help you to see blind spots that you would otherwise miss. Also, when generation after generation of godly men proclaim the same truths, such as the doctrines of God's grace in salvation, you realize that they were all reading the same Book! These truths have strengthened and sustained the saints in every age. Reading their biographies helps me to stand firm when these truths are under fire in our day.

\*Fourth, Christian biographies give me an understanding of people and of myself. I see that even great men of God had their shortcomings and faults, and yet God used them mightily. This is not to excuse my own faults, but it helps me realize that God can and will use me in spite of my imperfections. By reading of some of the mistakes that these great men made, hopefully I can avoid the same. By seeing how they trusted God against overwhelming trials, I'm encouraged to follow their examples. So read the godly examples of the prophets and

read Christian biographies!

#### Related Resource:

- [Pastor Steven Cole's list of Christian Biographies and short comments](#) - excellent resource

**James 5:11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.**

NET James 5:11 Think of how we regard as blessed those who have endured. You have heard of Job's endurance and you have seen the Lord's purpose, that the Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

GNNT James 5:11 δο μακαρ ζομεν το ζ πομε ναντας τ ν πομον ν β κο σατε κα τ τ λος κυρ ου ε δετε, τι πιολ σπλαγχν ζ στιν κ ριος κα ο κτ ρμων.

NLT James 5:11 We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy.

KJV 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.

ESV James 5:11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

ASV James 5:11 Behold, we call them blessed that endured: ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful.

CSB James 5:11 See, we count as blessed those who have endured. You have heard of Job's endurance and have seen the outcome from the Lord. The Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

NIV James 5:11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

NKJ James 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord-- that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

NRS James 5:11 Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

YLT James 5:11 lo, we call happy those who are enduring; the endurance of Job ye heard of, and the end of the Lord ye have seen, that very compassionate is the Lord, and pitying.

NAB James 5:11 Indeed we call blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of the perseverance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, because "the Lord is compassionate and merciful."

NJB James 5:11 remember it is those who had perseverance that we say are the blessed ones. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and understood the Lord's purpose, realising that the Lord is kind and compassionate.

GWN James 5:11 We consider those who endure to be blessed. You have heard about Job's endurance. You saw that the Lord ended Job's suffering because the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

BBE James 5:11 We say that those men who have gone through pain are happy: you have the story of Job and the troubles through which he went and have seen that the Lord was full of pity and mercy in the end.

- **We count those blessed who endured:** Jas 1:12 Ps 94:12 Mt 5:10,11 10:22 Heb 3:6,14 10:39
- **You have heard of the endurance of Job:** Job 1:21,22-2:9,10 13:15,16 23:10
- **have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings:** Job 42:10-17 Ps 37:37 Ec 7:8 1Pe 1:6,7,13 2Pe 2:9
- **the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful** Ex 34:6 Nu 14:18 1Ch 21:13 2Ch 30:9 Ne 9:17,31 Ps 25:6,7 Ps 51:1 78:38 86:5,15 103:8,13 116:5 119:132 136:1-26 Ps 145:8 Isa 55:6,7 63:7,9 La 3:22 Da 9:9,18,19 Joe 2:13 Jon 4:2 Mic 7:18 Lu 1:50 6:36 Ro 2:4 Eph 1:6 2:4

## CONSIDER JOB TRUST GOD'S COMPASSION

**Behold** (2400) see note on [idou](#). Note that the revised NAS95 and NET for some reason omit the **bold**, even though it is clearly in the Greek text. I think that is a mistake, because the Spirit inspired the writing of [idou](#) to get our attention! What James is saying is pay attention to the story of perseverance of suffering of Job who underwent incredible suffering and let it sink into your innermost being, to give you encouragement and hope (cf Ro 15:4).

**We count those blessed who endured** - Using **we** James unites himself with his readers in expressing admiration for those who suffered for righteousness in the past. Indeed, James has already told us "Blessed is a man who perseveres (hypomeno in [present tense](#) = "keeps on keeping on" only possible in a man or woman enabled by the Holy Spirit) under trial; for once he has been approved (dokimos), he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12)

**We count...blessed** (3106) ([makarizo](#) from [makarios](#) = blessed from [makar](#) = blessed) means to call or consider someone blessed, fully satisfied (independent of circumstances but some writers say because of favorable circumstances) or especially favored. The KJV and YLT translate this verb as "count them" or "call them" happy, but this is misleading. **Happiness** is a subjective, emotional response and depends on what "happens!" **Blessing** on the other hand is objective and reflects the "unalterable approval and reward of God." The only other NT use is Luke 1:48+ in "Mary's Magnificat" as she declares "for **bold** from this time on all generations **will count me blessed** ([makarizo](#))." **Hiebert** remarks that "The [present tense](#) verb "**we consider blessed**" declares that it was a common practice to admire a display of such brave perseverance, with the willingness to consider them "blessed," or "fortunate."

**Makarizo** - 12 verses in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#):

Ge 30:13; Nu 24:17; Job 29:10; Job 29:11; Ps. 41:2; Ps. 72:17; Ps. 144:15; Song 6:9; Isa. 3:12; Isa. 9:16; Mal. 3:12; Mal. 3:15

**Gilbrant** - The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) reflects this meaning when Leah said "the daughters will call me blessed" (Genesis 30:13). Makarizō occurs numerous times with the same sense (Job 29:11; Psalms 41:2; 72:17 [LXX 40:2; 71:17]). Often it is the Lord that "blesses" one, in that He bestows blessings or favors upon men. When the word is used with men as subject, the sense is more often that of counting or pronouncing one to be blessed. The papyri refer to one born under favorable planetary signs as "born under much blessing"

**Hiebert on those...who endured** - They remained bravely under their siege of trials without losing heart and so faithfully endured until the end.

**Who endured** (ESV = remained steadfast; NIV = have persevered) (5278) ([hypomeno](#) from [hypó](#) = under, as in under the rule of someone + [ménō](#) = to abide or remain) means literally to remain under but not just with resignation, but with a vibrant hope. The idea of enduring is not just to "grin and bear it" but to remain under trials in a such a way that we glorify God as we learn the lessons the trials are meant to teach us, instead of seeking ways to get out from under (note the prefix preposition "[hupo](#)" = under) the trials and be relieved of the pressure. And so endurance or perseverance is a mark of a person who is genuinely saved for twice Jesus says "**the one who endures to the end**" will be saved (Mt 24:13<sup>±</sup>, Mt 10:22), which is known as the doctrine of [perseverance of the saints](#). The point is that the only way one could truly end to the end (especially if they experienced suffering and/or persecution for their faith is by the supernatural empowerment of the Holy Spirit.) Wayne Detzler agrees writing that "True Christian **perseverance** is not tied to tenacity. It is rather the work of God the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. The starch in a saint's spine is shown by Scripture to be nothing less than the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit."

Job is quite an example to consider because the very first verse describes him as a man of peerless character

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless [tam](#) = complete, man of integrity, cf [Daniel-Man of Integrity](#), upright, fearing God and turning away from evil (WHY DID HE TURN FROM EVIL? HE FEARED GOD WITH REVERENTIAL AWE!). (Job 1:1)

**You have heard of the endurance of Job** - In declaring **you have heard** James assumes his readers are familiar with the OT story of Job and "heard" suggest this may have been at public readings of the OT Scriptures (yes, they did thing like that in those days, instead of flipping on the TV or surfing the Web!). And they likely would have known that Job took the esteemed place with Noah and Daniel as men of righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14, 20<sup>±</sup>). Earlier James had called his readers to rejoice in trials "knowing that the testing of your faith produces **endurance**. ([hypomone](#) - same word James uses in Jas 5:11) And let **endurance** ([hypomone](#)) have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (James 1:3-4<sup>±</sup>) Job is the prototype for perseverance under trial!

Job may have been unclear on why he was suffering but he held firmly to his integrity proving that he was not serving the Lord for the "benefits" of divine blessing.

Job 1:21-22 He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God. (THIS IS AMAZING TESTIMONY GIVEN HIS LOSS OF HIS CHILDREN AND MUCH OF HIS WEALTH).

Job 2:10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job 13:15 "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.

Job 16:19 "Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, And my advocate is on high.

Job 19:25 "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.

Whereas **makrothumeo** used above is more often patience with difficult people (cf Mt 18:26, 29, 1 Th 5:14<sup>+</sup>), **hypomone** generally speaks of patience with difficult circumstances (James 1:3-4<sup>+</sup>). Lightfoot says **makrothumia** is "the self-restraint which does not easily retaliate" and **hypomone** is "the temper which does not easily succumb to suffering." Job is an interesting study because his difficult circumstances also brought 4 difficult people into his life (his wife - Job 2:9, and 3 "less than ideal" "comforters" - Eliphaz Job 4:1-5:27, Bildad Job 8:1-22, Zophar - Job 11:1-20). MacArthur adds that "Both (makrothumeo and hypomone) are essential; patience with people is just as important as patience in difficult circumstances. Patience is the righteous standard God expects all believers to conform to no matter what trial they face. Thus, patience under persecution becomes another test of genuine saving faith for James. He also exhorts true Christians to remain patient no matter how severe or relentless their sufferings."

**Hiebert** has an interesting comment on the endurance of Job - Although he did reveal remarkable patience in his initial acceptance of his calamities (Job 1:21; 2:10), Job's vehement protests against his sufferings can scarcely be described as "patient." But the term James uses here is not that found in verse 10 (makrothumia) but rather hypomonē (cf. the verb in 11a), which denotes endurance, (James 1:3-4, 12). In the face of all his unexplained sufferings, Job is a memorable model of endurance under tremendous testing, for under it all he remained unswervingly loyal to God (Job 1:21; 2:10; 16:9-21; 19:25-27). Zodhiates remarks, "His imperfections and human weaknesses are scarcely remembered. Only his patience is spoken of. This is very characteristic of God's longsuffering towards His saints." ([James Commentary](#))

**Endurance** (perseverance) ([5281](#))**(hypomone)** from **hupo** = under + **meno** = stay, remain, abide) literally means abiding under. The root idea of **hypomone** is to remain under some discipline, subjecting one's self to something which demands the submission of one's will to something against which one naturally would rebel. It portrays a picture of steadfastly and unflinchingly bearing up under a heavy load and describes that quality of character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial. The picture is that of steadfastness, constancy and endurance. It has in it a forward look, the ability to focus on what is beyond the current pressures (eg Jesus "Who for the joy set before Him **endured** [verb form hypomeno] the Cross despising the shame" Hebrews 12:2<sup>+</sup>). And so **hypomone** does not describe a grim resignation or a passive "grin and bear" attitude but for believers a Spirit wrought triumphant facing of difficult circumstances knowing that even out of evil God guarantees good (Ro 8:28). God enables us to "remain under" (or endure) whatever challenges, trials, tests, afflictions, etc, He providentially allows in our life.

**THOUGHT** - How are you doing beloved? If you are like me (and most saints), you are experiencing manifold trials! Are you bearing up under them, leaning hard on the empowering of the Spirit (the only way we can supernaturally remain under the "load.")?

**And have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings**- Several translations (ESV, NET, NRSV) have "the purpose" rather than outcome. The Greek word **telos** can be used to denote the goal toward which a movement is directed. This verse indicates that God allowed Satan to test Job and Satan's purpose or goal was to try to get Job to be impatient and give up, ultimately to prove that he was serving God only for the blessings. Job did become impatient with himself and his critical friends, but he never lost his faith in God. Though he did not understand what God was doing, Job knew that he could trust God and that God would vindicate him in the end.

**Hiebert on outcome of the Lord's dealings** suggests one interpretation is "The meaning is that the goal God had in view in allowing all Job's sufferings to come upon him has been revealed: to refute Satan's slander. (Job 1:11; Job 2:4-5) and to vindicate and strengthen Job's faith." ([James Commentary](#))

Indeed in Job 42:5-6 we see one of the most incredible aspects of the Lord's dealing with Job

"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes."

Through his trials ultimately Job ended up seeing God!

**D. L. Moody** once said, "Trust in yourself and you are doomed to disappointment; trust in your friends, and they will die and leave you; but trust in God, and you will never be confounded in time or eternity." Trials are the soil in which faith can flourish.

I love **John Calvin's** wise remark that "Afflictions ought ever to be estimated by their end." James would agree for he teaches that afflictions endured ironically yield greater "endurance" and their end is a Christian character which is "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (Jas 1:3-4<sup>±</sup>)

**Outcome** (5056)(**telos**) means an end, a completion, a **consummation**. The word **termination** is close but misses the **essence** of the meaning, because a process can be terminated without reaching completion or consummation, which is the essence of the meaning of telos. The idea of telos is that the various stages that are reached to go on to full development (eternal significance). **Telos** refers to a goal achieved, a result attained, a realization, an end-goal, a purpose fulfilled (Job 13:15).

**Henry Morris** on **Job** - This is the only NT reference to Job. Many modern theologians have alleged that the book of Job was a great dramatic poem, with Job merely a fictional character concerned with the perennial problem of undeserved suffering. James, however, confirms the historicity of Job and his experiences.

## **MERCY - NOT GIVING US WHAT WE DESERVE**

James closes out his exhortation to the believers to endure their trials with Spirit enabled patience by reminding them that God is not some cosmid **ogre**, but to the contrary is characterized by being **full of compassion and is merciful**

**THOUGHT** - If you are in the midst of a trial, an adversity, a period of suffering, you, like most of us, begin to have thoughts like "Does God really care about me?" Then beloved, the truth in this section is for you. The answer is a loud, resounding "Yes, He cares about you!" If you are in the midst of the furnace of affliction, take a moment and listen to the old (1904) hymn by Civilla D. Martin entitled **God Will Take Care of You**. Peter exhorts you to cast " all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." (1 Pe 5:7<sup>±</sup>)

Be not dismayed whate'er betide,  
God will take care of you;  
Beneath His wings of love abide,  
God will take care of you.  
  
God will take care of you,  
Through every day, o'er all the way;  
He will take care of you,  
God will take care of you.  
  
Through days of toil when heart doth fail,  
God will take care of you;  
When dangers fierce your path assail,  
God will take care of you.  
  
God will take care of you,  
Through every day, o'er all the way;  
He will take care of you,  
God will take care of you.  
  
All you may need He will provide,  
God will take care of you;  
Nothing you ask will be denied,  
God will take care of you.  
  
God will take care of you,  
Through every day, o'er all the way;  
He will take care of you,  
God will take care of you.  
  
No matter what may be the test,

God will take care of you;  
Lean, weary one, upon His breast,  
God will take care of you.

God will take care of you,  
Through every day, o'er all the way;  
He will take care of you,  
God will take care of you.

#### Related Resource:

- [The Refiner's Fire](#) (or see below)
- [The patience of Job—why is Job famous for being patient](#)

**Hiebert** - Men often fail to understand the true character of God as long as He permits them to endure oppression and injustice. James gently reminds his readers that, if they also will remain loyal to God amid their trials, they also will come to a personal realization of the kindly nature of God. ([James Commentary](#))

Although Job had some "issues" with his suffering, in the midst of his afflictions he was able to affirm

"When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10[commentary](#))

**That the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful**- The goal of the Lord's dealings with Job in effect were a demonstration of His compassion and mercy. God could have allowed Job to remain in his state of suffering and mental anguish, but he did not. As noted above Job ended up with a greater revelation of God than ever before Job 42:5-6 and as the Scripture records

The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold. 11 Then all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversities that **the LORD had brought on him**. And each one gave him one piece of money, and each a ring of gold. 12**The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning**; and he had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys (EACH OF THESE NUMBERS IS LITERALLY DOUBLE WHAT HE LOST IN Job 1:3). 13 He had seven sons and three daughters. 14 He named the first Jemimah, and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. 15 In all the land no women were found so fair as Job's daughters; and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers. 16 After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations. 17 And **Job died, an old man and full of days**. (Job 42:10-17)

**Lord** (2962) see note above on [kurios](#). In the context of Job kurios would be Yahweh or Jehovah of the OT (first use is in Job 1:6 = Yahweh; Lxx = tou kuriou - lemma = [kurios](#)).

James may be loosely quoting from Psalm 103:8 which says "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness." The Septuagint uses the same relatively rare (19x see below) adjective [oiktirmon](#) as does James (only other NT use Lk 6:36+ used by Jesus to describe divine mercy). The compound adjective [polusplagchnos](#) is not found elsewhere in either Septuagint nor NT.

**Davids** writes on full of compassion that "God is not vicious; he does not love watching people suffer." ([The New International Greek Testament Commentary -The Epistle of James](#)).

The Old Testament repeatedly affirms this truth about God's compassion and mercy - Read Ex. 33:18–19; 34:6; Nu. 14:18; 2 Chron. 30:9; Neh. 9:17; Ps 86:15; Ps 103:8; Ps 111:4; Ps 112:4; Ps 116:5; Ps 145:8; Isa. 30:18; Lam. 3:22–23; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2.

**Full of compassion** (4184) ([polusplagchnos](#) from [polus](#) = much + [splagchnon](#) = inward parts - heart, liver; figurative = emotions) literally means "many-boweled," and reflects the Hebrew thought which spoke of the bowels or inward parts as the seat of man's emotions. This is the only use in the Bible and some think James composed this compound word for his epistle. And so this word pertains to a very great degree of affection and compassion of the Holy God for His children (1 Jn 3:1±). Play and ponder the incredible truth about you and me - [Oh how He loves you and me.](#)

**Blue Letter Bible** on God's attribute of **mercy** - **Mercy** is when that which is deserved is withheld to the benefit of the object of the mercy. God has demonstrated this attribute in abundance with respect to mankind. We from nearly the beginning of our existence have deserved nothing but wrath; having sinned and fallen short of eternal life in glory, we can do nothing to commend ourselves to or defend ourselves before God. But thankfully, God has been so amazing in His mercy. Over and against merely having the mercy

to allow us to live out our miserable lives without destroying us instantly, God has chosen us to greatness and glory by the hand of His Son. The believer finds himself in Christ and enjoys full well the fruits of God's mercy. ([Blue Letter Bible](#))

God is **merciful** - Ps. 86:15; Ezek. 39:25; Luke 1:78; Ro. 9:16; Ro 11:30, 32; Ro 12:1; Ro 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 2:4; Heb. 2:17; 1 Pe 1:3; 1 Pe 2:10

**Merciful** (3629) ([oiktirmon](#)) from [oikteiro](#) in turn from **oiktos** = compassion, pity = compassion or pity which in turn is said to be derived from the interjection **oi** = "Oh!"; see also study of cognate - [oiktirmos](#)) is an adjective which describes one who is concerned about another's unfortunate state or misery" (BDAG), one who has pity, one who is compassionate being moved or motivated by sympathy. The Lord is the Source of mercy. When we demonstrate mercy, we are like the Father because this is one of His great attributes.

**Oiktirmon** is found only 19x in the entire Bible (Septuagint and NT combined)

Exod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; Jdg. 5:30; 2 Chr. 30:9; Neh. 9:17; Neh. 9:31; Ps. 78:38; Ps. 86:15; Ps. 103:8; Ps. 109:12; Ps. 111:4; Ps. 112:4; Ps. 145:8; Lam. 4:10; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2; Lk. 6:36; Jas. 5:11

First use - Exodus 34:6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, **compassionate** (Lxx = oiktirmon) and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

**Hiebert** sums up this section - The God who revealed His abundant compassion and mercy in vindicating Job is the same today. The same spirit of steadfast loyalty to God under affliction will assuredly bring a fitting reward. James has been concerned to help believers to overcome the tendency to react like the world to the injustices heaped on them by the world. The world, by its very nature antagonistic to God and His kingdom, will continue to oppose God's people. But if these truths grip the hearts of His people, it will enable them to overcome the spirit of worldliness by refraining from a worldly reaction to the world's injustices. ([James Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** sums it up this way - Any trial, suffering, or persecution that Christians face can be patiently endured by anticipating the Lord's coming, recognizing the Lord's judgment, following the example set by the Lord's faithful servants, understanding the Lord's blessing, realizing the Lord's purpose, and considering the Lord's compassionate, merciful character. Those who do so will be able to say triumphantly with the psalmist, "For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). (See his sermon [James 5:7-11: How to Face Trials Patiently](#))

#### Related Resource:

- [Mercy](#) - God's Attribute
- [God's mercies are new every morning](#)

## THE REFINER'S FIRE

Job said "When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10-note) Gold is tested by fire. Saints are tested by adversity! None of God's children enjoy the Refiner's Fire, but all of us experience it to one degree or another, at one time or another. It may or may not always be a physical trial, but it is always a spiritual trial! And we often find ourselves with a gamut of emotions (anger, fear, despair, frustration, etc) and questions like "Why me?," "Why now?," etc. But as someone has said God takes us into His "darkroom" to develop our character (Ro 5:3-4-note). And so when you are in the darkness, hold on to what God has shown you in the light. As Corrie Ten Boom puts it "When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away your ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer." We need to remember that the darker the night, the brighter the stars. The hotter the fire, the purer the gold. Even as a gem cannot be polished without friction, neither can a saint be perfected without trials. The more a tree of righteousness is shaken by the wind, the deeper he or she becomes rooted in Christ Jesus. In the final analysis, affliction is the saint's school of faith and trial is the school of trust. In light of the fact that faith-testing times can be faith-strengthening times, our great Teacher writes many a bright lesson on the blackboard of affliction, for some of life's greatest lessons are learned in the school of affliction! "All God's testings have a purpose, Someday you will see the light. All He asks is that you trust Him, Walk by faith and not by sight. (Zoller)

C H Spurgeon, who experienced many physical and spiritual trials, said that there is no education like adversity, testifying "I have derived more real benefit and permanent strength and growth in grace, and every precious thing, from the furnace of affliction, than I have ever derived from prosperity. Stars may be seen from the bottom of a deep well, when they cannot be discerned from the top of a mountain. So are many things learned in adversity which the prosperous man dreams not of. Troubles, like files, take away our rust; like furnaces, they consume our dross; like winnowing-fans they drive away the chaff, and we would have but little usefulness, if

we had not been made to pass through the furnace. And in all our troubles we have found the character of God a comfort, for the Refiner is never very far from the mouth of the furnace when His gold is in the fire." While God never promised we would miss the storms, He has promised we will make the harbor! As Warren Wiersbe poignantly phrased it...

**"When God puts His own people into the furnace,  
He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat.  
He knows how long and how much."**

He is not an arsonist, but a Refiner! "Though times be dark, the struggles grim, And cares rise like a flood, This sweet assurance holds to Him: My God is near and good." (Hager)

At age 68 (I am now 73 and still) I am experiencing the most severe trial of my life (and faith) as my wife of 45 (50) years is suffering from a strange mental illness (not overt Alzheimer's) which is causing her to progressively withdraw from daily interactions with family and friends and spend almost all her waking time before the television watching the same shows over and over (you can do that today with streaming media). And so as I was reading Spurgeon's sermon on Job 23:10-note ("Whither Goest Thou?"), I was moved to share excerpts with you beloved, as I know many of you are undergoing trials which don't seem to be either momentary or light! My prayer is that God's Spirit will use these truths to fortify you in the fire you are experiencing so that when you come forth like pure gold, you might bring great glory to the Lamb of God, Christ Jesus. Amen

Spurgeon's Sermon - "TRIALS are no evidence of being without God, since TRIALS come from God. Job says, "When He has tried me." He sees God in his afflictions. The devil actually wrought the trouble; but the Lord not only permitted it, He had a design in it. Without the divine concurrence, none of his afflictions could have happened. It was God that tried Job, and it is God that tries us. No trouble comes to us without divine permission. All the "dogs of affliction" are muzzled until God sets them free. Nay, against none of the seed of Abraham can a dog move its tongue unless God permits. Troubles do not spring out of the ground like weeds that grow randomly, but they grow orderly as plants set in the garden. God appoints the weight and number of all our adversities. If He declares the number ten they cannot be eleven. If He wills that we bear a certain weight, no one can add half an ounce more. Since every trial comes from God, afflictions are no evidence that you are out of God's way.

Besides, according to the text, these trials are tests: "When he hath tried me." The trials that came to Job were made to be proofs that the patriarch was real and sincere. Did not the enemy say: "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." [Job 1:10-11]. The devil will have it that as dogs follow men for bones, so do we follow God for what we can get out of Him. The Lord lets the devil see that our love is not bought by temporal goods, that we are not mercenary followers, but loving children of the Lord, so that under dire suffering we exclaim, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). By the endurance of grief our sincerity is made manifest, and it is proven that we are not mere pretenders, but true heirs of God. (Ro 8:17-note)

If you have met with TROUBLES, remember they will come to an end. The holy man in our text says, "WHEN He has tried me." As much as to say, He will not always be doing it. There will come a time when He will have done trying me (1Pe 1:6-note, 1Pe 5:10-note). Beloved, put a stout heart to a steep hill and you will climb it before long. Put the ship in good trim for a storm, and though the winds may howl for a while, they will at length sob themselves asleep. There is a sea of glass for us after the sea of storms (Rev 4:6-note). Only have patience and the end will come. Many a man of God has lived through a hundred troubles when he thought one would kill him, and so will it be with you. You young believers, you that are bound for the kingdom, but have only lately started for it, be not amazed if you meet with conflicts (Phil 1:29-note, 2Ti 3:12-note). If you very soon meet with difficulties, be not surprised (1Pe 4:12-note). Let your trials be evidence to you rather that you are in the right, than that you are in the wrong way; "for what son is there whom his father does not chasten?" (Heb 12:7-8-note) He that will go to hell will find many to help him thither; but he that will go to heaven may have to cut his way through a host of adversaries (Acts 14:22). Pluck up courage (Jn 16:33). The rod is one of the tokens of the child of God. If thou were not God's child you might be left unchastened; but inasmuch as you are dear to Him, He will whip you when you disobey. If you were only a bit of common clay God would not put you into the furnace; but as you are gold and He knows it, you must be refined. And to be refined it is needful that the fire should exercise its power upon you (1Pe 1:6-7-note). Because you are bound for heaven, you will meet with storms on your voyage to glory (1Th 3:2-4note).

Have you confidence in God as to these storms? Can you say, in the language of the text, "When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold"? If you are really trusting in Jesus, if He is everything to you, you may say this confidently, for you will find it true to the letter. If you have really given yourself up to be saved by grace, do not hesitate to believe that you will be found safe at the last (2Ti 4:18-note). Trust Christ for everlasting salvation: mark the word "everlasting." (2Pe 1:11KJV+) I thank God, that when I believed in His Son Jesus Christ, I laid hold upon final perseverance: I believed that where He had begun a good work He would carry it on and perfect it in the day of Christ (Php 1:6-note, 1Th 5:24-note). I believed in the Lord Jesus, not for a year or two, but for all the days of my life, and to eternity. I want your faith to have a "hand" of that kind, so that you grasp the Lord as your Savior to the uttermost

(Heb 7:25KJV-note). I cannot tell what troubles may come, nor what temptations may arise; but I know in whose hands I am, and I am persuaded that He is able to preserve me (2Ti 1:12-note), so that when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. I go into the fire, but I shall not be burned up in it. "I shall come forth." Like the three holy children, though the furnace be heated seven times hotter (Da 3:16-19-note), yet the Son of God will be with me in the furnace (Da 3:25KJV-note), and "I shall come forth" with not even the smell of fire upon me (Da 3:27-note). Yes, "I shall come forth," and none can hinder me. It is good to begin with this holy confidence, and to let that confidence increase as you get nearer to the recompense of the reward (Jas 1:12-note, 2Co 4:17-note). Hath He not promised that we shall never perish (Jn 10:28)? Shall we not, therefore, come forth as gold?

This confidence is grounded on the Lord's knowledge of us. "He knows the way that I take" (Job 23:10note): therefore, "when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." If something happened to us which the Lord had not foreseen and provided for, we might be in great peril. But He knows our way even to the end (Ps 1:6-note), and is prepared for its rough places. If some amazing calamity could come upon us which the Lord had not reckoned upon, we might well be afraid of being wrecked. But our Lord's foreseeing eye hath swept the horizon and prepared us for all weathers. He knows where storms lurk and cyclones hide away; and He is at home in managing tempests and tornadoes. If His far-seeing eye has spied out for us a long sickness and a gradual and painful death, then He has prepared the means to bear us through (2Cor 12:9-10-note). If He has looked into the mysterious unknown of the apocalyptic Revelation, and seen unimaginable horrors and heart melting terrors, yet He has forestalled the necessity which He knows is coming. It is enough for us that our Father knows what things we have need of and "when he has tried us, we shall come forth as gold." Amen.

Listen to the words of Cowper's incomparable hymn "[God Moves in a Mysterious Way](#)"

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

Read Spurgeon's entire sermon on Job 23:10 [Where Are You Going?...](#)

**See Commentaries related to suffering...**

- [1Pe 1:6-7±](#)
- [2Cor 4:17-18±](#)
- [Ro 5:3-5 ±](#)
- [Job 23:10±](#)

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**Steven Cole** - The late Dr. Albert Schweitzer, famous medical missionary, was once asked what is the best way to raise children. He replied, "There are three ways: by example, by example, and by example."

What he said about child rearing is also true about growing as a believer. We all need examples to follow, especially when we face trials. If the aim of the Christian life is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, then we especially need to glorify and enjoy Him when we encounter trials. That's when the world is watching to see if our faith is genuine. That's when our witness can be the most effective.

John Piper emphasizes that "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." But when serious trials hit, we are susceptible to Satan's temptation to doubt God's love and goodness towards us. When we see the ungodly prospering and we're suffering, we're tempted, like the psalmist (Ps 73) to say in our confusion, "Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure" (Ps 73:13). But after he gets his proper bearings, he rightly concludes (Ps 73:25-26), "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Jonathan Edwards has a wonderful sermon on that text, "God the Best Portion of the Christian." He exclaims (The Works of

Jonathan Edwards [Banner of Truth], 2:106), "But how great is the happiness of those who have chosen the Fountain of all good, who prefer him before all things in heaven or on earth, and who can never be deprived of him to all eternity!"

When a believer endures severe trials and even faces death with that attitude, God is glorified. In *The Roots of Endurance* ([Crossway Books], p. 28), where he highlights perseverance in the lives of John Newton, Charles Simeon, and William Wilberforce, Piper says, "The aim of all our endurance is that Christ be seen and savored in the world as our glorious God."

The theme of patiently enduring trials runs throughout the Bible. We saw it in our recent study of Hebrews. The author states (Heb 10:36), "For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised." He repeatedly exhorts us to hold fast our confession of faith (Heb 3:6, Heb 3:14; Heb 10:23). He wants us to be "imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12). Of Abraham, he stated (Heb 6:15), "And so, having patiently waited, he inherited the promise." Heb 11 is filled with examples of those who by faith endured hardship and suffering.

This is James' theme here. His readers were suffering, while the ungodly rich were prospering at their expense. As a good teacher, James repeats his earlier theme (Ja 1:12), "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." In our text, he says,

When you encounter trials, look to the prophets and to Job as examples of patient endurance. ([James 5:10-11 Patient Endurance](#))

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### **Patiently Waiting**

Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. —James 5:7

Today's Scripture: James 5:7-11

If we truly believe that Jesus is coming back, we have good reason to be patient. Why should we not endure indignity and injustice if we know that ultimate and absolute justice is just around the corner? Is there any better hope than to know that Jesus is coming again to set everything right?

Like the farmer, we look ahead with hope. The farmer plants the seed and waits patiently for the harvest. Likewise, we await the time when God will judge evil men and women and reward Christ's followers. He has given us His word that He's coming back. It's the surest thing in the world. When German pastor and theologian Helmut Thielicke was asked what he will say to Jesus at His return, he replied, "I knew You meant it."

The "good life" here is a bonus, not something we deserve. Unrelieved suffering and oppression may well be our lot here on earth. But remember, we suffer for Jesus' sake (Philippians 1:29). Although circumstances may seem bleak at present, there's a better day coming. Beyond the world of sight there is a Judge keeping watch over His own, waiting to answer every plea and avenge every wrong. God hates injustice and will vindicate us in due time.

"Therefore," James said, "be patient" (5:7). By: David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### Reflect & Pray

Keep me praying, keep me trusting  
Every step along life's way!  
Keep me waiting, keep me watching,  
For He may return today! —Thiesen

The hope of Christ's coming can keep us going.

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### **The Race**

"Quit!" "Give up, you're beaten," they shout and plead  
there's just too much against you now, this time you can't succeed.  
And as I start to hang my head in front of failure's face,  
my downward fall is broken by the memory of a race.

And hope refills my weakened will as I recall that scene,  
for just the thought of that short race rejuvenates my being.  
A children's race, young boys, young men; how I remember well,  
excitement sure, but also fear, it wasn't hard to tell.

They all lined up so full of hope, each thought to win that race  
or tie for first, or if not that, at least take second place.  
Their fathers watched from off the side, each cheering for his son,  
and each boy hoped to show his dad that he would be the one.

The whistle blew and off they went, young hearts and hopes of fire,  
to win, to be the hero there, was each young boy's desire.  
One boy in particular, his dad was in the crowd,  
was running near the lead and thought "My dad will be so proud."

But as he speeded down the field across a shallow dip,  
the little boy who thought to win, lost his step and slipped.  
Trying hard to catch himself, his hands, flew out to brace,  
and mid the laughter of the crowd he fell flat on his face.

So, down he fell and with him hope, he couldn't win it now.  
Embarrassed, sad, he only wished to disappear somehow.  
But as he fell his dad stood up and showed his anxious face,  
which to the boy so clearly said, "Get up and win that race!"

He quickly rose, no damage done, behind a bit that's all,  
and ran with all his mind and might to make up for his fall.  
So anxious to restore himself, to catch up and to win,  
his mind went faster than his legs, he slipped and fell again.

He wished that he had quit before with one disgrace.  
"I'm hopeless as a runner now, I shouldn't try to race."  
But, in the laughing crowd he searched and found his father's face,  
that steady look that said again, "Get up and win that race!"

So he jumped up to try again, ten yards behind the last,  
if I'm going to gain those yards, he thought, I've got to run real fast.  
Exceeding everything he had, he regained eight or ten,  
but trying so hard to catch the lead, he slipped and fell again.

Defeat! He lay there silently, a tear dropped from his eye,  
there's no sense running anymore—three strikes I'm out—why try'  
The will to rise had disappeared, all hope had fled away,  
so far behind, so error prone, closer all the way.

"I've lost, so what's the use," he thought, "I'll live with my disgrace."  
But then he thought about his dad, who soon he'd have to face.  
"Get up," an echo sounded low. "Get up and take your place.  
You were not meant for failure here, get up and win that race."

With borrowed will, "Get up," it said, "you haven't lost at all,  
for winning is not more than this; to rise each time you fall."  
So, up he rose to run once more, and with a new commit,  
he resolved that win or lose, at least he wouldn't quit.

So far behind the others now, the most he'd ever been,  
still he gave it all he had and ran as though to win.  
Three times he'd fallen stumbling, three times he rose again.  
Too far behind to hope to win, he still ran to the end.

They cheered the winning runner as he crossed, first place;  
head high and proud and happy—no falling, no disgrace.  
but, when the fallen youngster crossed the line, last place,  
the crowd gave him the greater cheer for finishing the race.

And even though he came in last with head bowed low, unproud,

you would have thought he'd won the race, to listen to the crowd.

And to his dad he sadly said, "I didn't do so well."

To me, you won," his father said. "You rose each time you fell."

And now when things seem dark and hard and difficult to face,

the memory of that little boy helps me in my own race.

For all of life is like that race, with ups and downs and all.

And all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall.

"Quit!" "Give up, you're beaten," they still shout in my face,

but another voice within me says, "Get up and win that race." Family Times

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### **The Purposes of God**

The purposes of God often develop slowly because His grand designs are never hurried.

The great New England preacher Phillips Brooks was noted for his poise and quiet manner. At times, however, even he suffered moments of frustration and irritability. One day a friend saw him feverishly pacing the floor like a caged lion. "What's the trouble, Mr. Brooks?" he asked. "The trouble is that I'm in a hurry, but God isn't!" Haven't we felt the same way many times?

Some of the greatest missionaries of history devotedly spread the seed of God's Word and yet had to wait long periods before seeing the fruit of their efforts. William Carey, for example, labored 7 years before the first Hindu convert was brought to Christ in Burma, and Adoniram Judson toiled 7 years before his faithful preaching was rewarded. In western Africa, it was 14 years before one convert was received into the Christian church. In New Zealand, it took 9 years; and in Tahiti, it was 16 years before the first harvest of souls began.

Thomas a Kempis described that kind of patience in these words: "He deserves not the name of patient who is only willing to suffer as much as he thinks proper, and for whom he pleases. The truly patient man asks (nothing) from whom he suffers, (whether) his superior, his equal, or his inferior...But from whomever, or how much, or how often wrong is done to him, he accepts it all as from the hand of God, and counts it gain!"

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### **The Waiting Soul**

Breathe from the gentle south, O Lord,

And cheer me from the north;

Blow on the treasures of thy word,

And call the spices forth!

I wish, Thou knowest, to be resign'd,

And wait with patient hope;

But hope delay'd fatigues the mind,

And drinks the spirits up.

Help me to reach the distant goal

Confirm my feeble knee;

Pity the sickness of a soul

That faints for love of Thee!

Cold as I feel this heart of mine,

Yet, since I feel it so,

It yields some hope of life divine

Within, however low.

I seem forsaken and alone,

I hear the lion roar;

And every door is shut but one,

And that is Mercy's door.

There, till the dear Deliverer come,

I'll wait with humble prayer;

And when He calls His exile home,

The Lord shall find him there.

Olney Hymns,

### Always in a Hurry

To those Christians who are always in a hurry, here's some good advice from the 19th-century preacher A. B. Simpson: "Beloved, have you ever thought that someday you will not have anything to try you, or anyone to vex you again? There will be no opportunity in heaven to learn or to show the spirit of patience, forbearance, and longsuffering. If you are to practice these things, it must be now." Yes, each day affords countless opportunities to learn patience. Let's not waste them. Commenting on our need for this virtue, M. H. Lount has said, "God's best gifts come slowly. We could not use them if they did not. Many a man, called of God to...a work in which he is pouring out his life, is convinced that the Lord means to bring his efforts to a successful conclusion. Nevertheless, even such a confident worker grows discouraged at times and worries because results do not come as rapidly as he would desire. But growth and strength in waiting are results often greater than the end so impatiently longed for. Paul had time to realize this as he lay in prison. Moses must have asked, 'Why?' many times during the delays in Midian and in the wilderness. Jesus Himself experienced the discipline of delay in His silent years before His great public ministry began." God wants us to see results as we work for Him, but His first concern is our growth. That's why He often withholds success until we have learned patience. The Lord teaches us this needed lesson through the blessed discipline of delay.

### Power To Persevere

You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. —James 5:11

Professional golfer Paula Creamer had worked all year long to earn a berth in the 2008 ADT Championship, the year's final tournament on the LPGA tour. When the event began, however, Creamer was suffering from peritonitis, a painful inflammation of the abdominal wall. Throughout the four days of the tournament, she was in constant pain and unable to eat. She even spent a night in the hospital because of the condition. Still, she persevered to the end and, amazingly, she finished third. Her determination earned her many new fans.

The challenges and crises of life can tax us to the very end of our strength, and in such times it is easy to want to give up. But James offers followers of Christ another perspective. He says that while life is a battle, it is also a blessing: "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11).

In Job's example, we find encouragement and the power to persevere in life's darkest hours—power rooted in God, who is compassionate and merciful. Even when life is painful and hard, we can persevere because God is there. His mercy endures forever (Ps. 136). By: Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### Reflect & Pray

I searched with all my heart to know  
If God was really there;  
He graciously revealed Himself,  
His mercy, love, and care.  
—Cetas

God provides the power we need to persevere.

**James 5:12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.**

NET James 5:12 And above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath. But let your "Yes" be yes and your "No" be no, so that you may not fall into judgment.

GNP James 5:12 Πρ π ντων δ, δελφο μου, μ μν ετε μ τε τ ν ο ρων ν μ τε τ ν γ ν μ τε λλον τιν ρκον. τω δ μ ν τ Να να κα τ Ο ο, να μ π κρ σιν π σητε.

NLT James 5:12 But most of all, my brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned.

KJV 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.

ESV James 5:12 But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

ASV James 5:12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; that ye fall not under judgment.

CSB James 5:12 Now above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. Your "yes" must be "yes," and your "no" must be "no," so that you won't fall under judgment.

NIV James 5:12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear--not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

NKJ James 5:12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes," be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.

NRS James 5:12 Above all, my beloved, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "Yes" be yes and your "No" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

YLT James 5:12 And before all things, my brethren, do not swear, neither by the heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath, and let your Yes be Yes, and the No, No; that under judgment ye may not fall.

NAB James 5:12 But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your "Yes" mean "Yes" and your "No" mean "No," that you may not incur condemnation.

NJB James 5:12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear by heaven or by the earth or use any oaths at all. If you mean 'yes', you must say 'yes'; if you mean 'no', say 'no'. Otherwise you make yourselves liable to judgement.

GWN James 5:12 Above all things, my brothers and sisters, do not take an oath on anything in heaven or on earth. Do not take any oath. If you mean yes, say yes. If you mean no, say no. Do this so that you won't be condemned.

BBE James 5:12 But most of all, my brothers, do not take oaths, not by the heaven, or by the earth, or by any other thing: but let your Yes be Yes, and your No be No: so that you may not be judged.

- **But above all, my brethren:** 1Pe 4:8 3Jn 1:2
- **do not swear, either by heaven or by earth:** Mt 5:33-37 23:16-22
- **but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no** 2Co 1:17-20
- **so that you may not fall under judgment:** Jas 3:1,2 1Co 11:34
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## STOP SWEARING

**Hiebert** writes that "The insertion of this injunction against swearing at this point in the epistle has been much discussed. Indeed, Sadler holds that it "has never been satisfactorily explained." ([James Commentary](#))

**But (de)** is normally a Term of contrast, but in this context is not clearly a contrast. This conjunction can also identify a continuation of thought and that is probably the sense in this context so that it would be more accurately translated "and" or "now." And notice that James is stating this command "so that you may not fall under judgment." This would connect with James 5:9 which speaks about the coming judgment.

**Above all** - In this context this phrase conveys the thought of importance or preeminence. The subject of swearing occupies only one verse but James wants to make sure his readers do not discount its importance! By using the phrase **above all** James is calling his readers to pay careful attention to the following stern command.

**Thompson** on **above all** - This is obviously one of the worst sins one can commit with his or her mouth. ([Sermon](#))

A s **Hiebert** explains "Having censured three different manifestations of the spirit of worldliness (James 4:1-5:11), this verse concludes that discussion. This evil of swearing reflects the spirit of worldliness in one of its most reprehensible forms. James has in

view the self-serving attempt to hide the truth by appearing to appeal to God to establish the truth. Such duplicity is totally inconsistent with Christian honesty." ([James Commentary](#))

Note that James is not speaking of swearing (as some like A T Robertson who suggest prohibition of profanity) like we use the term in English where **swearing** means "to utter obscenities or profanities."

**John MacArthur** has an interesting explanation on why the readers would use swearing or oaths. He explains that "Fallen men are basically inveterate liars....That we live in a world of lies should surprise no one familiar with the Scriptures, which designate unregenerate humanity as children of the devil—the father of lies (John 8:44). That basic dishonesty has led men to impose oaths on others in an often futile attempt to force them to be truthful and keep their promises. Both the simple oaths of children, the sophisticated oaths often required by cults and other organizations, and everything from legal contracts to peace treaties are necessitated by the recognition of mankind's basic dishonesty. Manifesting of this same dishonesty, the Jews not only swore according to Old Testament law by the name of the Lord (and occasionally violated such oaths), but also had developed the practice of swearing false, evasive, deceptive oaths by everything other than the name of the Lord (which alone was considered binding). They swore by anything other than the Lord for the very purpose of pretending to a truthfulness that they had no intention of maintaining. Jesus also condemned this practice (Matt. 5:33–36<sup>±</sup>; Mt 23:16–22). The custom of swearing oaths was a major part of life in biblical times. It had become an issue in the church, particularly the predominantly Jewish congregations to which James wrote. Since swearing oaths was an integral part of Jewish culture, Jewish believers brought that practice into the church. But such oath taking is unnecessary among Christians, whose speech is to be honest (Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9), and whose lives are to demonstrate integrity and credibility. For believers, a simple yes or no should suffice because they are faithful to keep their word.

**Adamson** in a sense sums up MacArthur's comment declaring that "swearing is **necessary only in a society where truth is not revered**." (NINCT - James) (bolding mine)

**Hiebert** adds that "In the Jewish Mishnah, a compilation of decisions made by the rabbis on the interpretation of various points of the law, a whole tract is devoted to the subject of oaths. In the discussion of binding oaths it is asserted that oaths made "'by Shaddai' or 'by Sabaoth' or 'by the Merciful and Gracious' or 'by him that is longsuffering and of great kindness,' or by any substituted name, they are liable," but oaths "by heaven and by earth" are exempt. Oaths in which the name of God was used were held to be binding, whereas those in which no direct mention of God was made were not held to be binding. Thus the force of an oath that to all appearances seemed binding could be evaded by minute inaccuracies in the formula used. They developed the fine art of hiding the truth behind their pious oaths. It was the use of such subtle distinctions to escape the binding obligations of their oaths that Jesus and James condemned. Such a practice of pretending to appeal to God to establish the truth while deftly framing an oath not considered binding was the worst form of worldliness. It is the hypocrisy of furthering personal advantage under the pious guise of appealing to God to establish the truth." ([James Commentary](#))

**William Barclay** - "James is not thinking of what we call bad language, and of swearing in the modern sense of the term; he is thinking of what we call taking oaths, and confirming a statement or a promise or an undertaking by an oath. In the ancient world, there were two evil practices. (1) There was a distinction--especially in the Jewish world--between oaths which were binding and oaths which were not binding. The distinction was this: any oath in which the name of God was directly used was considered to be definitely binding ... (2) There was in this age an extraordinary amount of oath-taking. This in itself was quite wrong. For one thing, the value of an oath depends to a large extent on the fact that it is very seldom necessary to take one. Its impressiveness lies in its exceptional character ... And for another thing, the practice of taking frequent oaths was nothing other than a proof of the prevalence of lying and cheating and falsehood and swindling. In an honest society no oath is needed; it is only when men cannot be trusted to tell the truth that they have to be put upon oath."

**Tasker**: "The way to avoid swearing of this kind is by being strictly truthful in ordinary speech, **avoiding exaggeration** (ED: OH MY, AM I GUILTY ON THIS ONE!), so often indulged in to create an impression, eschewing the half-truth which conceals the lie, and generally aiming at simplicity and straightforwardness. Sometimes it is the fear that their words will not be taken at their face value which leads men to try and reinforce them by swearing; and that in itself is a reflection upon the insincerity and duplicity which so often characterize conversation. Men should say what they mean, and mean what they say."

**My brethren** - So James is speaking to believers, to the church. "James' teaching is a radical call to radical truthfulness...If heeded, this call will set us apart from the rest of the world, and even get us in trouble at times. But radical truthfulness will also bring power to our lives and grace to a confused world." (K Hughes)

**Do not swear** - This is a [present imperative with a negative](#) which means either do not begin this or stop this practice. James echoes the words of Jesus

Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.' 34 "But I say to you, **make no oath at all, either by heaven**, for it is

the throne of God, 35 or **by the earth**, for it is the footstool of His feet, or **by Jerusalem**, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. 36 "Nor shall you make an oath **by your head**, for you cannot make one hair white or black. (Mt 5:33-36+)

**Steven Cole** quotes Haddon Robinson - In commenting on Mt 5:33-37, Haddon Robinson (The Christian Salt & Light Company [Discovery House Publishing], p. 156) says with regard to the Sermon on the Mount, "If anger was the real issue of murder, lust the real issue of adultery, selfishness the real issue of divorce, then deceit is the real issue of oaths." He adds (p. 158), "Jesus wasn't addressing whether or not we should take an oath. He was talking about whether or not we are truthful.... We don't tell the truth because we have taken an oath; we tell the truth because we are truthful." ([James 5:12 Talking Straight](#))

**William Barclay** on Mt 5:33-37 - Here is a great eternal truth. Life cannot be divided into compartments in some of which God is involved and in others of which he is not involved; there cannot be one kind of language in the Church and another kind of language in the shipyard or factory or the office; there cannot be one kind of standard of conduct in the Church and another kind of standard in the business world. The fact is that God does not need to be invited into certain departments of life, and kept out of others. He is everywhere, all through life and every activity of life. He hears not only the words which are spoken in his name; he hears all words; and there cannot be any such thing as a form of words which evades bringing God into a transaction. We will regard all promises as sacred, if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God.

When read in context of all Scripture, it is clear that James is not forbidding taking of a solemn oath, but is stressing need for integrity in speech, and the avoidance of using God's name or a sacred object to guarantee that what one said is truthful. Stated another way, truthfulness is to be the norm among brothers and sisters in Christ. When speech is truthful, taking oaths is totally unnecessary. But apparently these believers had brought this practice into the church leading James to issue this command.

**Either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath** - These (**by heaven or by earth**) were well-known Jewish "oath formulas" and were not used by Gentiles (see Mt 5:34 above for 4 examples given by Jesus). As alluded to above (see [comment](#)), in James' day, the Jews had developed a complex system of making oaths, so that they could swear by something other than the Name of God (like "I swear by heaven" or "I swear by earth") and it was not considered binding by the one who made the oath! In other words this was a deceptive way to hide one's lying speech behind the veneer of an oath that supposedly guaranteed truthfulness, which was not always (perhaps even not often) the case! If one swore using God's Name, they would in essence be invoking His punishment on themselves if what they said proved not to be truthful. Understandably, this latter type of oath was felt to be a serious matter, and so His Name was generally avoided when one intended to speak an untruthful oath. The solemn nature of taking oaths is underscored by the sad example of Jephthah who made a horrible oath that ended up costing the life of his only child, his daughter (Read Jdg 11:30-36+). The phrase **with any other oath** signifies any other oath of the same kind (other = allos, not heteros).

**MacArthur** adds that "there was a hidden "out" in it: rabbinic teaching held that only vows to the Lord were binding. In their thinking, God was only a party to an oath if His name were invoked. All other oaths, they taught, could be (and were intended to be) violated without committing perjury—much as people in our culture invalidate their vows by saying, "I had my fingers crossed." Attempting to deceive others, many Jews would swear by heaven, Jerusalem, the temple, the altar in the temple, the veil in the temple, their own heads, etc.—anything but the name of the Lord. Such evasive swearing was intended to hide their lying hearts. In Matthew 23:16–22, Jesus condemned the Jewish religious leaders for this hypocritical practice."

**Alfred Edersheim** says there was a Jewish proverb that said, "In the hour of need a vow..." (Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Book 3, p. 18).

**Do not swear** (make no oath)([3660](#))([omnuo](#)) derives from a basic meaning to grasp a sacred object (Friberg). The verb **omnuo** thus means to swear, confirm or affirm the truth of a statement by calling on a divine being (heaven, altar, temple, throne of God) to execute sanctions against a person if the statement in question is not true. To put one's self under oath. **BDAG** phrases it this way "to affirm the veracity of one's statement by invoking a transcendent entity, frequently with implied invitation of punishment if one is untruthful." **Omnuo** is distinct from [horkizo](#) which was used to adjure or implore someone divine to accomplish a task (demon in Mark 5:7+; exorcists in Acts 19:13+).

**Ryrie** - Not all oaths are forbidden by this verse, only flippant, profane, or blasphemous ones. Oaths in the sense of solemn affirmations were enjoined in the law (Ex. 22:11) and were practiced by Christ (Mt 26:63-64) and Paul (Ro 1:9).

**Matthew Henry** - The sin of swearing is condemned; but how many make light of common profane swearing! Such swearing expressly throws contempt upon God's name and authority. This sin brings neither gain, nor pleasure, nor reputation, but is showing enmity to God without occasion and without advantage. It shows a man to be an enemy to God, however he pretends to call himself

by his name, or sometimes joins in acts of worship. But the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

**But (de)** Term of contrast. Gives the contrast with the practice of swearing oaths.

**Dave Roper** writes "One of the marks of a Spirit-filled man is that he is faithful. You can count on his word....And so James says, in effect, "Above all a Christian's word is dependable." Honesty for a Christian is not the best policy -- it is the only policy." [Sermon](#)

**John Phillips** - The believer is to be so much a man of his word that no oaths are necessary. There was a time in English history when honor was prized as the highest virtue. A man who broke his word was the lowest form of cad. A common saying in lands where the flag of the empire was displayed was, "It is the word of an Englishman." (Exploring the Epistle of James: An Expository Commentary)

**The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible** – Something that is often overlooked is this fact: swearing and cursing do not make a matter more believable; they really make a matter more suspicious. A person swears something because his character or the matter is questionable.

**Steven Cole** - Gordon Clark put it (*A Christian Philosophy of Education* [Trinity Foundation], p. 158), "Since God is truth, a contempt for truth is equally a contempt for God." Don't be in contempt of God! Work at being a person whose **yes** means **yes** and whose **no** means **no**. ([James 5:12 Talking Straight](#))

**Your yes is to be yes, and your no, no** (NET = "But **let** your "Yes" **be** yes and your "No" be no") - It is more difficult to discern in the NAS rendering, but the "**is**" is a command which is easier to discern in the NET rendering. The command "**let...be**" is in the [present imperative](#) which calls for this to be your habitual practice, your lifestyle, a practice only possible in one who relies on [the Holy Spirit to obey](#)! Your practice must continually be to say what you mean to say -- No hidden agenda. No hypocrisy. No half-truths. No exaggeration. No lying. If you say "yes," say it because you truly mean it!

**Kistemaker** - That is, be honest and speak the truth at all times. Let no flippant word come from your lips. Let everyone know that "your word is as good as gold." (Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude)

**Edersheim** (i. p. 583) has a Midrash quotation: "The good man's yea is yea, and his nay nay."

**Hiebert** adds that "James was essentially concerned with total honesty in speech on the part of Christians. The [present imperative](#) "**let... be**" (ētō) marks this as the believer's unvarying duty. Their affirmative statement, "**yes**" (nai), is to be so transparently honest that no further confirmation is needed, while their negative statement, "**no**" (ou), will need no oath to assure its truthfulness. **The addition of a confirmatory oath to his statement is an acknowledgment that the individual is conscious that his word is weak and ordinarily unreliable.** "The use of oaths is an index of the presence of evil." (Alfred Plummer) But a person known to be totally honest will have no difficulty having his plain declaration accepted. The fact that our courts find it necessary to place a witness under oath to tell the truth is an obvious confession that they recognize that people are congenital liars. A Christian's reputation for rugged honesty in all relations of life should be such that no oath to tell the truth would be needed. (bolding added) ([James Commentary](#))

As stated above speaking an oath was not prohibited, but would generally be unnecessary for believers whose speech is (or should be) marked by truthfulness and honesty. As Paul said

"Therefore, laying aside [apotithemi](#) in [aorist tense](#) = THROW IT ASIDE ONCE AND FOR ALL, LIKE YOU WOULD CAST OFF A ROTTING, STINKING GARMET WHICH YOU WOULD BE LOATHE TO PUT BACK ON! falsehood ([pseudos](#)), **SPEAK** [present imperative](#) - [to obey this command we must rely on the power of the Spirit](#) TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another (INTERESTING THOUGHT - SINCE WE ARE MEMBERS OF ONE ANOTHER, TO LIE TO A FELLOW BELIEVER IS TANTAMOUNT TO LYING TO YOURSELF!)." (Eph 4:25<sup>+</sup>).

Again James echoes his half brother Jesus' words...

But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil. (Mt 5:37<sup>+</sup>)

**J Vernon McGee** - In other words, my friend, when you say you are going to promise something, it ought to be as if you were in a courtroom and had taken an oath to tell the truth. All your conversation ought to be like that. I can remember when my dad went to the bank one year to borrow money to get his cotton gin started. The banker was busy and said to my dad, "Go ahead and take the money." My dad said, "But I haven't signed the note." I never shall forget what the banker said, "If you say you will repay it, that is just as good as if you have signed a note. So come in later and sign up." May I say to you, a man's word ought to be just that good. Some people, even if they take an oath on a stack of Bibles, do not honor their word. (Thru The Bible)

**So that you may not fall under judgment** - This is the purpose of striving to maintain truthfulness in our speech. The ESV has a

strong rendering "so that you may not fall under condemnation."

So what does this **judgment** mean? In essence by commanding no oath taking James is saying our speech should be truthful. While all believers fail from time to time in speaking truthfully, that is not the habit of our life. On the other hand if a person is habitually untruthful, he is habitually lying. It would seem that John's statement in Revelation is then relevant to this latter individual. "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and **all liars**, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Rev 21:8<sup>+</sup>, cf "swear falsely" in Mal 3:5, Zech 5:4) That would appear to be one possible interpretation of **fall under judgment/condemnation**. Many sermons and commentaries actually avoid making a statement on the meaning of fall under judgment (ESV Study Bible, Warren Wiersbe, J Vernon McGee, Pillar NT Commentary, Life Application Commentary). **There seem to be two camps** - (1) A believer will be disciplined or chastened by the Lord now and suffer loss of rewards at the Bema Seat and (2) A professed believer will end up with eternal punishment.

Here are some responses regarding the meaning of **fall under judgment**:

**Expositor's Bible Commentary** - In the careless use of oaths a person is in danger of taking God's name in vain, for which he will come under judgment (cf. Exod 20:7). (ED: WHAT KIND OF JUDGMENT?)

**Grant Richison** - We invite God's judgment to ourselves if we behave contrary to straightforward speech. The believer will fall into divine chastening if he brings God into a false oath. Ex. 20:7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." The following passage shows how the believer falls into divine discipline: Death, James 5:14-15. Loss of health, James 5:16

**Steven Cole** - Judgment is a significant issue for James. He just said (5:9), "Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door." He's talking to Christians ("brethren"), not to unbelievers. How will Christians fall under judgment? Jesus said (John 5:24), "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." Paul wrote (Rom. 8:1), "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." So with regard to eternal judgment, those who have truly trusted in Christ do not need to fear. But Paul warns the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:15) that we will be judged for our works: "If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." He later (1 Cor. 11:32) explains to the same church that they needed to judge themselves before partaking of the Lord's Supper so that they would not be judged: "But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world." That discipline can be very severe, including physical illness and even death (1 Cor. 11:30)!....Do we sufficiently fear the coming judgment of our works (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10-11)? Should we fear it? ([James 5:12 Talking Straight](#))

**Jim Bomkamp** - Not being a man/woman of your word will cause a person to 'fall under judgment'. Jesus taught that we will all give account one day to the Lord of "every idle word" we have spoken (Matt. 12:36), and as Christians though our judgment will be one of rewards, nonetheless we shall give account. ([James 5:12-20 Don't Swear By Anything](#))

**Grant Osborne** - Everything we say must have as its purpose the glory of God, and as before (James 2:12; 4:11-12; 5:9) false speech will cause us to "sin and be condemned." (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary)

**Kurt Richardson** - As in other passages where he warned of God's judgment for participation in evil by their actions (James 2:4; 3:12-13; 4:11-12; 5:9), James here warned that their words were actions and would be counted against them when they did not conform to the faith required of them (cf. James 4:17). (New American Commentary – Volume 36: James)

**James Adamson** - The judgment of James 5:9 and James 5:12 refers not to human judgment but to God's: so "under condemnation" must be interpreted eschatologically. Here is yet further proof that the Epistle of James is permeated and dominated by an urgent sense of imminent judgment in the end of the present world (James 5:9). (NICNT- James)

**George Stulac** - James says above all and you will be condemned because he is addressing not just a simple matter of dishonesty but a fundamental lack of faith and denial of grace. ([The IVP New Testament Commentary – James](#).)

**Phil Newton** somewhat skirts around the issue - You can go to church, preach sermons, sing hymns, pray, and do all sorts of acts of service, but if you are loose with your tongue you have no reputation whatsoever as a Christian. The profane talk and duplicitous conversations James warns of will keep anyone professing to be

a Christian from being taken seriously. ([Sermon](#)) (ED: HIS PHRASE "PROFESSING TO BE A CHRISTIAN" WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE JUDGMENT/CONDEMNATION JAMES IS REFERRING TO IS ETERNAL PUNISHMENT. NEWTON'S POINT SEEMS TO BE THAT THE FRUIT OF ONE'S LIPS IS A GOOD BAROMETER OF THE ROOT OF ONE'S PROFESSION - GENUINE OR NOT.)

**Spiros Zodhiates** - What we are actually admonished to do here is to back up what we say by what we are and what we do. The confirmation of works is more persuasive than the affirmation of words. A layman who was visiting at the home of a minister was called upon to lead in family worship. He began to read Colossians 3. When he reached verse 9, which reads, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds," he paused and laid down his glasses. "Do you know," he said, "I find it the hardest thing for a Christian not to lie." Those present looked somewhat startled, but he went on to explain, "I find that Christians are in danger of living in such a way that their whole life before the world is a living lie. By our words we all acknowledge Christ, but so many deny Him and bring reproach upon His Word by living an inconsistent life before men." That is exactly the message which James wishes to convey to us here. To affirm one's faith and not confirm it by the resultant works of faith is being worse than an infidel. It is taking the name of God in vain. Let what we say be proven by what we are. How can some say that this verse does not belong to this epistle? Has this not been the subject of his epistle right along? Has it not been a treatise against hypocrisy, faith without works? **The affirmation of a faith that is not existent will only result in judgment, the judgment of God on us. One cannot be accounted a Christian for saying and swearing he is one, but by acting as one. Do we live out what we affirm by word of mouth?** (Faith, Love & Hope: An Exposition of the Epistle of James)

**Geoff Thomas** - The text ends with a solemn divine warning. It brings the swearer to the Day of Judgment. (ED: [READ SERMON](#) - IN CONTEXT HE IS SPEAKING OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT).

**Jamieson** - Condemnation - judgment of "the Judge" who "standeth before the door" (James 5:9). (ED: WHAT JUDGEMENT?)

**C Jerdan** - Swearing is a ruinous sin. James adds, "That ye fall not under judgment." A foul tongue is the index of a foul heart. Indeed, the two act and react upon one another. The profane man, therefore, is destroying his own soul. He who swears by hell in jest may well tremble lest he go to hell in earnest. The Lord our God will not suffer him to escape his righteous judgment (Deuteronomy 28:58, 59). ([Against Swearing](#))

**Valley Bible Church** - As a motivation against swearing false oaths, James points out the consequences of violating them. Those who do so, he warns, will "fall under judgment." The judgment (KRISIS) James has in mind here is not God's chastening of believers. "Judgment" (KRISIS) is never used in the New Testament to refer to believers' chastening. It is speaking of eternal judgment. We see this word used in this way in James 2:13 to describe God's merciless sentencing to hell of those whose lack of mercy reveals their unregenerate heart. ([Straight Talk](#))

**John MacArthur** - The judgment James has in mind here is not God's chastening of believers. Krisis (judgment) is never used in the New Testament to refer to believers' chastening (a different word, paideuō, is used; cf. 1 Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:6–7). James used krisis in 2:13 to describe God's merciless sentencing to hell of those whose lack of mercy reveals their unregenerate hearts. The gospels used it more than twenty-five times with the idea of passing sentence (e.g., John 5:22, 24, 27, 29, 30). In Acts 8:33 it described Christ's judgment at Pilate's hands. Paul used it twice to speak of God's judgment of sinners (2 Thess. 1:5; 1 Tim. 5:24), as did the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 9:27; 10:27). Peter used it to refer to the condemnation of sinners on the day of judgment (2 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4, 11; 3:7), as did Jude (Jude 6, 15) and the apostle John (1 John 4:17). James certainly does not teach that believers will never err with their tongues (cf. 3:2). Christians may lapse into falsehood on occasion, though lying will not be the unbroken pattern of their lives. But that is not James's point here. The sobering warning he gives in verse 12 is that those who continue to blaspheme God's holy name through lying oaths face eternal damnation; thus, this is another test of living faith. Those whose lives are characterized by a pattern of lying give evidence of having an unregenerate heart. And the Bible teaches that liars, spiritual children of the father of lies (John 8:44), will be sentenced to hell (Rev. 21:8, 27; 22:15). (James Commentary) (See also [Sermon](#))

Jesus referred to the importance of our speech in Matthew 12 declaring to His Jewish audience...

"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. 35 "The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. 36 "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an

accounting for it in the day of judgment. **37** “For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (OUR WORDS PER SE DO NOT CONDEMN US, BUT THEY ARE OBJECTIVE, OBSERVABLE EVIDENCE OF A PERSON’S SPIRITUAL CONDITION. IN FACT OUR WORDS ARE RELIABLE EVIDENCE OF THE REALITY OF SALVATION!) (Mt 12:34-37, cf Lk 6:43-45+)

Jesus is saying that what a person speaks is a manifestation ("overflow") of what is in their hearts. In fact (see verse**37** above) our speech is a litmus test of the state of our hearts! A born again person will generally have God honoring speech, for that is the fruit of a transformed heart. In other words a regenerate heart generally generates honest, truthful speech! "Speaking the truth in every situation will cause believers to shine forth in the darkness of a world of lies (cf Phil 2:14,15<sup>±</sup>)." (MacArthur)

**THOUGHT** - Dear reader, how is your speech, remembering that it is a reflection of the spiritual condition of your heart? None of us will speak perfectly truthful, God honoring words without exception for we still have the fallen flesh to contend with (Gal 5:17+). But if our speech is not generally in the direction of truthful and God honoring, then we have reason to examine our heart -- are we truly born again? Do we have a new heart and a new power (the Spirit) controlling our speech (read Ezekiel 36:26,27+)? The speech of a redeemed person will be different, because it comes from his renewed, regenerate heart. Pure, wholesome, praising speech shows a new heart! So how's your speech?

**R C Sproul** adds - John Calvin writes that if James' audience “observed faithfulness as they ought, in their words, there would have been no necessity of so many superfluous oaths.” How trustworthy is your speech? Can people believe what you say? Do you see no harm in telling “little white lies?” If you have been guilty of being less than truthful in your speech, then go make amends with those you have offended and ask the Lord to help you make your tongue always speak the truth.

**Judgment** (2920)(**krisis** from **krino** = to judge, decide) means a decision or judgment, verdict, justice, court (tribunal). Earlier James used krisis explaining that "mercy triumphs over judgment." (Jas 2:13+).

#### Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about keeping your vows / oaths?](#)
- [What does it mean to let your yes be yes and your no be no?](#)
- [Why did oaths involve putting a hand under someone's thigh \(Genesis 24:9\)?](#)
- [Should a Christian make a promise?](#)
- [Is it wrong to swear to God?](#)

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**ILLUSTRATION** - A boy was on the witness stand in an important lawsuit. The prosecuting attorney cross-examined him, then delivered, he thought, a crushing blow to the boy's testimony.

“Your father has been telling you how to testify, hasn’t he?”

“Yes.” The boy didn’t hesitate with the answer.

“Now, said the lawyer triumphantly, “just tell us how your father told you to testify.”

“Well,” the boy said modestly, “Father told me that the lawyers would try to tangle me in my testimony, but if I would just be careful to tell the truth, I could repeat the same thing every time.”

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#### JAMES 5:12—Is oath-taking forbidden or blessed? - Norman Geisler

**PROBLEM:** This and many other verses (cf. Hosea 4:2; Matt. 5:33–37) condemn oath-taking. In James’ words, “Above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath.” Jesus had said the same thing, namely, “Do not swear at all: neither by heaven … nor by the earth” (Matt. 5:34–35). On the other hand, there are many places in the Bible where oaths were taken and blessed by God (cf. Gen. 21:24; Deut. 6:13). Indeed, angels took oaths (Rev. 10:5–6), as did God Himself (Heb. 6:13).

**SOLUTION:** Obviously there is a good sense of oath-taking and a bad sense that can be contrasted in the following manner:

GOOD OATHS	BAD OATHS
True ones	False ones
To do good	To do evil

Sacred ones	Profane ones
Meaningful ones	Vain ones
Serious ones	Frivolous ones
Judicial ones	Secret ones

Nothing in the Bible condemns taking a courtroom oath "to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God." On the other hand, secret oaths taken in fraternal organizations which are contrary to God's Word are forbidden by the Scriptures cited above. Even Jesus submitted to being put under oath by the high priest at His trial (Matt. 26:63). (When Cultists Ask)

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#### **PURE SPEECH JAMES 5:12 - James Smith**

There is a closer connection between this verse and the subject of the oppression of the hireling already dealt with, than at first sight imagined. Under the galling pressure of injury and oppression one is tempted to the use of expletives, of impure and unwise speech, as one outlet, but this is here forbidden.

Is not this verse but an echo of words spoken on the Mount by the illustrious Brother of James, as recorded in Matthew 5:33-37. Our speech, to be golden, must be:

- I. Pure. "Swear not."
- II. Unadorned. "Let your yea be yea," etc.
- III. Dignified. As becometh believers.
- IV. Inspired. By and from the right source. "For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt. 5:37); or, as Weymouth, "Comes from the evil one," suggesting that the Evil One is the author of impure and undignified speech.
- V. Disturbing. Anything else causes us "to fall into condemnation," disturbing our own consciences, and grieving the Lord.

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Several years ago the UPI wire services carried this prayer by Reverend Fred Holloman, chaplain of the Kansas Senate:

Omniscient Father:

Help us to know who is telling  
the truth. One side tells us one  
thing, and the other just the opposite.  
And if neither side is telling the  
truth, we would like to know that,  
too.  
And if each side is telling half  
the truth, give us the wisdom to put  
the right halves together.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.

The report didn't indicate the tone with which the chaplain delivered the prayer—whether with a twinkling Mark Twain irony or righteous despair. However it was prayed, it represents a biting cynicism regarding those in public life.

One of the rich and famous, Ernest Hemingway was an inveterate liar who lied about everything including his childhood, his athletic prowess, his military exploits, his liaisons, so that he was, as one of his wives called him, "the biggest liar since Munchausen." (Preaching the Word - Kent Hughes)

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**Lehman Strauss** - An example of the wrong kind of an oath, which is sinful swearing, is the lodge oath taken by millions of men and women. I quote but one of many:

"Binding myself under no less a penalty than that of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by its roots, and buried in the rough sands of the sea at low-water mark, where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours, should I ever knowingly or willingly violate this my solemn oath and obligation as an Entered Apprentice Mason. So help me God, and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same."

"Binding myself under no less a penalty than that of having my left breast torn open, my heart plucked out, and given as a prey to the wild beasts of the field and the fowls of the air..."

"Binding myself under no less a penalty than that of having my body severed in twain, my bowels taken from

thence and burned to ashes, the ashes scattered to the four winds of heaven, so that no more trace or remembrance may be had of so vile and perjured a wretch as I, should I ever knowingly or willingly violate this my solemn obligation as a Master Mason. So help me God, and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same."

Study carefully the above oath, and then ask yourself how any Christian in his right mind could possibly bind himself to such a penalty. Actually he has sworn to suicide, to "that of having my throat cut across." Such an unholy and profane oath dishonors God and His Holy Word, and ought never to be taken by any one, much less a Christian. Actually, the oath taken by the Entered Apprentice is not known by him until he hears it for the first time to swear to it. He has no choice but to swear allegiance to a blind oath. How utterly ridiculous! How foolish and absurd! My own conviction is that a Christian should never be a member of a lodge where he is unequally yoked with unbelievers and where he must swear to secrecy an oath he has never before heard. (Lehman Strauss Commentary - James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James)

#### Related Resources:

- Free Masonry Oaths - [related article](#)
- [What is Free Masonry and what do Free Masons believe?](#) - See bottom of page which discusses the following topic "When a Christian takes the oath of Freemasonry, he is swearing to the following doctrines that God has pronounced false and sinful"

#### James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Then he **must pray**. Is anyone cheerful? He is to **sing praises**.

NET James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praises.

GNP James 5:13 Κακοπαθε τις ν μν, προσευχ σθω· ε θυμε τις, ψαλλ τω·

NLT James 5:13 Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises.

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

ESV James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.

ASV James 5:13 Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise.

CSB James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises.

NIV James 5:13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

NKJ James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.

NRS James 5:13 Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise.

YLT James 5:13 Doth any one suffer evil among you? let him pray; is any of good cheer? let him sing psalms;

NAB James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praise.

NJB James 5:13 Any one of you who is in trouble should pray; anyone in good spirits should sing a psalm.

GWN James 5:13 If any of you are having trouble, pray. If you are happy, sing psalms.

BBE James 5:13 Is anyone among you in trouble? let him say prayers. Is anyone glad? let him make a song of praise.

- **Is anyone among you suffering:** 2Ch 33:12,13 Job 33:26 Ps 18:6 50:15 91:15 116:3-5 118:5 Ps 142:1-3 La 3:55,56 Ho 6:1 Jon 2:2,7 Lu 22:44 23:42 Ac 16:24,25 2Co 12:7-10 Heb 5:7
- **Is anyone cheerful:** Judges 16:23-25 Da 5:4
- **He is to sing praises:** 1Ch 16:9 Ps 95:2 105:2 Mic 4:5 Mt 26:30 1Co 14:26 Eph 5:19 Col 3:16,17 Rev 5:9-14 7:10 14:3 19:1-6
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## REASONS FOR PRAYER AND PRAISE

**Steven Cole** introduces this section - Prayer is the obvious theme of verses Ja 5:13-18, with the noun or verb occurring in every verse. With the mention of suffering (Ja 5:13), James brings us full circle back to Ja 1:2-3, where he opened the book with the radical command to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials. The only way that we can do that is to view every difficulty through a God-ward perspective and to depend on God through prayer. ([James 5:13-16 The God-dependent Community](#))

**Hiebert** says "In these five verses (James 5:13-18) James offers his final and basic portrayal of living faith. The life that is dominated by a living faith will turn to God amid the varied experiences and vicissitudes encountered. It is this constant turning to God in all circumstances that gives meaning, unity, and empowerment to the Christian life." ([James Commentary](#))

**Rod Mattoon** entitles his sermon in James 5:13 "He is Lord in Times of Pressure." ([James Commentary](#))

In James 5:13 and James 5:14 note that the charge is to the individual to take the initiative - let him pray, let him sin, let him call (James 5:14).

**Lehmann Strauss** offers some wise counsel on these somewhat controversial passages - Ever since we commenced this series of devotional studies in the Epistle of James, I have been looking forward to these verses dealing with bodily healing. While I find no special delight in preaching from controversial passages in Holy Scripture, this portion of God's Word now before us has always intrigued me. I approach it prayerfully and carefully, seeking only the mind of the Holy Spirit. Please do not look for an exhaustive explanation in this treatise. Others before me have tried and come short. The wide disagreement and varied ideas of many commentators suggest that there is hidden truth here, some of which might never be clearly understood until we get to heaven. ([James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James](#))

**R C H Lenski** ties the present passage to the preceding prohibition on swearing or making oaths even though there is **no connecting particle** in the Greek text (no kai = and, etc) - It should not be difficult to see that v. 12, which is to stop this habit of swearing, is closely associated with the right use of God's name in prayer. How can a person who is constantly swearing meaningless oaths in his daily talk do any real praying or have the elders pray for him when he becomes ill? ([The Interpretation of The Epistle to the Hebrews and The Epistle of James](#))

The Psalmist David (who knew a little about suffering afflictions!) reminds us that believers are not immune to suffering writing "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers (Hebrew = to snatch or tear away, to rescue: Lxx = [rhuomai](#) = rescue from danger) him out of them all. ([Psalm 34:19](#))

**Is anyone among you suffering?** - Is anyone in trouble, experiencing misfortune or calamity (physical, mental, personal, financial, spiritual, etc) is a direct question to each of the believers in the body. **Suffering** is in the [present tense](#) describing continuous suffering. **Suffering** is not confined to bodily illness, but any kind of adversity. James used the noun form **kakopatheia** in James 5:10 to describe the suffering of the prophets. Hiebert adds that "This resumption of the interrogative form (James 2:5-7, 14-16, 20-21, 25; James 3:13; James 4:1, 4-5, 14) with the answering imperatives is fully in keeping with James's vigorous style. The rhetorical questions challenge the readers directly, while the singular verbs make this final test of a living faith an individual matter."

**Strauss** comments on **suffering** ([kakopatheo](#)) -- "It is the affliction of stressing and strenuous circumstances often the lot of God's own people. How do we act when some hardship strikes? What is the first thing we do or say when trouble comes? There can be no satisfying relief in an angry outburst or in the utterance of an oath such as is forbidden in verse twelve. During my many years as a pastor, varied have been the reactions of different people to their hardships. Some have gone to pieces physically, demanding immediate medical attention. Others grumbled and complained like the children of Israel in the wilderness ([Nu 11:1; 21:5, 6](#)). A few have even bitterly blamed God for being unloving and unfair." ([James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James](#))

**Suffering** (enduring hardship) ([2553](#)) ([kakopatheo](#) from **kakos** = evil + **pathos** = passion) is a general term which meant to suffer physical pain, hardship, troubles, problems, difficulties, evils or distress of various kinds. In secular Greek **kakopatheo** was used to describe the hardships inherent in military service (cf compound verb [sugkakopatheo](#) in [2 Ti 1:8±](#) and [2 Ti 2:3±](#)) and also meant to suffer misfortune or to be in distress. In [2 Ti 2:9±](#) (suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal), [2 Ti 4:5±](#) (Paul's charge to Timothy to "be sober in all things, **endure** hardship) the verb means voluntary, patient endurance of hardship and suffering for sake of the Gospel. **Zodhiates** on **kakopatheo** - The compound verb itself, then, means in effect "to suffer the evil blows of the outside world."

**Gilbrant** on **kakopatheo** - Used in connection with **sōma**, "body," this verb can be used to speak of sickness. Another meaning, though not as common, is "to bear hardship patiently," frequently in connection with military service. In non-biblical Greek of the New Testament era, Josephus employs **kakopatheō** to mean "to run into trouble" and also "to be able to endure trouble," again frequently

in military contexts (e.g., Antiquities 10.11.1). Its only occurrence in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) is found in Jonah 4:10. In that verse God reproved Jonah for having more pity for a withered gourd, which he did not "labor" over or make grow, than for an entire city of undiscerning people (Nineveh).

**Brian Bell** reminds us that James nickname was "Ol' Camel Knees - Just like a laborer's hands testify to his occupation, or a runners feet to his training, James callused knees testified to a life of serious prayer. So, we should listen up to what James has to say regarding Prayer! He walked his talk...on his knees! How is your prayer life presently? Too often our petitions fit the description of prayer given by **Thomas Brooks** who said, "Cold prayers are as arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wings; they pierce not, they cut not, they fly not up to heaven. Cold prayers always freeze before they reach heaven." Many kinds of prayer are named here: prayer for the sick, prayer for forgiveness, prayer for the nation, even prayer for the weather. There is no need that prayer cannot meet & no problem that prayer cannot solve. ([Sermon](#))

**Ross** - Do not break out into oaths, says James, nor into needless repining and grumbling. Pray, rather. "We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power." (The Epistles of James and John)

**Moffatt** writes that "Instead of murmuring against one another (James 5:9), or complaining peevishly, or breaking out into curses (OATHS), pray to God."

**Rudolf Stier** more holds that in these verses James "speaks further of the right use of the tongue; yet he goes back at once to the heart, from the ground of which, as before men, so also before God, our speech should come in its sincerity and simplicity, according to the spirit of our mind. We say very properly that praying is the best and holiest use of our tongue." ([James 5:13 Praying and Singing.](#))

**Hiebert** feels that "The absence of any connecting particle as well as the return to the interrogative form in James 5:13-14 suggest that James intended this portion of the letter as an independent paragraph. The unifying theme of these verses is the place and power of prayer in the believer's life. Every verse in this paragraph contains an explicit reference to prayer. James appropriately brings his tests of a living faith to a logical conclusion by insisting that Christian faith finds its center and power in a vital relationship with God through prayer in all the experiences of life. Through prayer the believer habitually lays hold of God's power for victory amid all these diverse experiences. Prayer constitutes the very heart of a vital Christian faith. Martin points out that "by concluding his work with an exhortation to prayer, especially for one another (James 5:16b) in the apostolic circle, James follows a pattern that is common in the NT epistles (Ro 15:30-32; Eph. 6:18-20; Phil. 4:6-7; Col. 4:2-4, Col 4:12; 1 Th 5:16-18, 1 Th 5:25; 2 Th 3:1-2; Philem. 22; Heb. 13:18-21; Jude 1:20-21)." James practiced what he preached. [Eusebius](#) quoted an ancient tradition saying that James spent so much time on his knees in the Temple praying for the people that his knees "became as hard as a camel's." ([James Commentary](#))

#### Related Resource:

- [James -The Man With Camel Knees - All the Men in the Bible](#) - **Excerpt** - He was a man who believed in the power of prayer, as evidenced by the space he devotes to it in his epistle. Because of his habit of always kneeling in intercession for the saints, his knees became calloused like a camel's; thus he became known as "The Man with Camel's Knees."He was cruelly martyred by the Scribes and Pharisees, who cast him from the pinnacle of the Temple. As the fall did not kill him, his enemies stoned him, finally dispatching him with a fuller's club (see Matt. 4:5; Luke 4:9). Across from the Valley of Jehoshaphat, there is a sepulcher called "The Tomb of St. James."

**Zodhiates** - The Christian is under pressure from the outside on every hand. Evil is all around, and here in this wicked and sin-stricken world we are caught in the very throes of evil. It is inescapable. We just cannot avoid bumping into the evil of our world no matter where we happen to live. Have you ever noticed that when you squeeze a rubber toy from underneath there is only one direction in which it can go, and that is upward? James is not speaking of the evil that is conceived and indulged in the human heart. Sin within the heart usually will cause a man to go anywhere but upward. The sinning heart does not want to see the face of God. But it is different with the heart that is pure but must dwell in the midst of an evil and perverse generation, under pressure in the home, in business, at school, and even at church. Such a person finds only one direction in which to go, and that is upward, heavenward. That is why James says, "Someone among you is afflicted: let him pray." And he must pray, if he wants to avoid succumbing to outside pressure. Herein, then, is the benefit of affliction, that man's heart is drawn by necessity into the presence of God, and in His presence there is joy unspeakable, irrespective of the affliction that has driven man there. (Faith, Love & Hope: An Exposition of the Epistle of James)

**Then he must pray** - This is a command in the [present imperative](#), a command which can only be obeyed as one relies on [the Holy Spirit](#) for empowerment to obey so that they are in essence [Praying in the Spirit](#). Are you in the valley of adversity and/or affliction? If so then James is writing to you dear believer! Believers need to make it their "reflex reaction," their habitual practice to turn to God when afflictions and adversity assail us!

**Hiebert** adds that "Instead of indulging in introspective self-pity, or complaining loudly to others of his terrible situation, let him turn to God for refuge and strength. His prayer may not change the situation, but it can give strength to bear it bravely as he submits himself to the divine providence. James began his message to his readers by setting before them the proper attitude to be taken amid trials (James 1:2-4) and reminding them of the availability of prayer to gain the wisdom needed to react rightly to their trials (James 1:5)" ([James Commentary](#))

**Strauss** adds "Do not complain! Do not grumble! Pray! Every affliction is a call to prayer. There were times when I felt that God sent adversity to draw me closer to Him in prayer. This has been particularly true when I had become lax in my prayer life. We all must admit that affliction has a way of making the heart humble, contrite, and more dependent upon God." (*Ibid*)

**He must pray** (4336)**(proseuchomai)** from **pros** = toward, facing, before [emphasizing the direct approach of the one who prays in seeking God's face] + **euchomai** = originally to speak out, utter aloud, express a wish, then to pray or to vow. Greek technical term for invoking a deity) in the NT is always used of prayer addressed to God (to Him as the object of faith and the One who will answer one's prayer) and means to speak consciously (with or without vocalization) to Him, with a definite aim (See noun [proseuche](#)).

**Proseuchomai** encompasses all the aspects of prayer -- submission, confession, petition, supplication (may concern one's own need), intercession (concerned with the needs of others), praise, and thanksgiving. **Vine** says that **proseuchomai** carries with it a notion of **worship** (but see the Greek word for worship = [proskuneo](#)) which is not present in the other words for prayer (eg, aiteo, deomai, both of which involve spoken supplication)

**Wuest** adds that the prefixed preposition **pros** "gives **proseuchomai** the idea of definiteness and directness in prayer, with the consciousness on the part of the one praying that he is talking face to face with God... (thus [proseuchomai](#)) speaks also of the consciousness on the part of the one who prays, of the fact of God's presence and His listening ear."

**John MacArthur** - The [present tense](#) (**proseuchomai**) of the verb translated **he must pray** suggests a continual pleading with God in prayer; it could be translated "let him keep on praying." When life is difficult, when believers are weak in faith, weary with persecution, and crushed by affliction, they must continually plead with God to comfort them. That is a basic spiritual truth, but one often forgotten. In the words of the beloved hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus,"

O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Ev'rything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged,  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy-laden,  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

**Steven Curtis Chapman's song** is apropos given James's charge in this passage. Play his song [Let Us Pray](#) (and then **PRAY!**)...

I hear you say your heart is aching  
You've got trouble in the making  
And you ask if I'll be praying for you please  
And in keeping with convention  
I'll say yes with good intentions  
To pray later making mention of your needs  
But since we have this moment here at heaven's door  
We should start knocking now, what are we waiting for?

Let us pray, let us pray, everywhere in every way  
Every moment of the day, it is the right time  
For the Father above, He is listening with love  
And He wants to answer us, so let us pray

So when we feel the Spirit moving

Prompting, prodding and behooving  
There is no time to be losing, let us pray  
Let the Father hear us saying  
What we need to be conveying  
Even while this song is playing, let us pray  
And just because we say the word, "Amen"  
It doesn't mean this conversation needs to end

Let us pray, let us pray, everywhere in every way  
Every moment of the day, it is the right time  
Let us pray without end and when we finish start again  
Like breathing out and breathing in, let us pray

Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence  
As our prayers draw us near  
To the One who knows our needs  
Before we even call His name

Let us pray, let us pray, everywhere in every way  
Every moment of the day, it is the right time  
For the Father above, He is listening with love  
And He wants to answer us, so let us pray

Let us pray everywhere in every way  
Every moment of the day, it is the right time  
Let us pray without end and when we finish start again  
Like breathing out and breathing in, let us pray

#### Related Resources:

- [10 Reasons To Believe In A God Who Allows Suffering](#)
- [Why Would A Good God Allow Suffering? Finding goodness in trouble](#)
- [Out of the Ashes - God's Presence in Job's Pain](#)

**Is anyone cheerful?** - In good spirits, merry. In essence James gives the same advice for the cheerful saint as he does for the suffering saint. To both of them he says take it to the Lord, in **prayer** and in **praises**. Guzik suggests "In fact, the two commands could be reversed: sufferers should sing also, and the cheerful should also pray."

**Osborne** - In times of prosperity it is critical not to become complacent and self-centered like the church at Laodicea. (Revelation 3:17-18)...We must continually (present-tense verbs) remind ourselves that everything good that is happening comes as a gift from God (1:17), and thus we will continue praising God for the good things he brings our way, trusting in him rather than ourselves for the future. (Ibid)

**Cole** - suffering and all blessings come from God for His glory and our ultimate good. So in every situation, we must learn to live with a God-ward, God-dependent focus. ([James 5:13-16 The God-dependent Community](#))

**Moo** offers the timely reminder, "When our hearts are comforted, it is all too easy to forget that this contentment comes ultimately only from God."

**Davids** writes "On the other hand, if one is in good spirits, i.e. joyful or of good courage even if the external situation looks poor (cf. "I urge you to **keep up your courage**" [\[euthumeo\]](#) Acts 27:22, 25+; Symmachus Ps. 32:11; Pr. 15:15), one should also not forget God." (NIGTC-James)

**Cheerful** ([2114](#))[\(euthumeo\)](#) from **eu** = good, well + **thumos** = temperament, mindset) means to be of good cheer or in good spirits, to be encouraged, keep up one's courage. **Gary Hall** adds "properly, showing positive passion which proceeds from a sound disposition (temper); hence, "to be of good cheer, in good spirits" (high morale)....refers to the assured believer living with passion fueled by God. This courage (inner optimism) enables them to boldly face struggles "head-on." Euthumeo is used only 3x in the NT - Paul is seeking to cheer up his companions after the ship wreck at Malta = Acts 27:22+; Acts 27:25+; Jas. 5:13.

**Zodhiates** on **euthumeo** - the word used here has to do with well-being of the soul, the strength and the disposition of the mind, the inner self which the world, press as hard as it may, cannot affect in any way. How beautiful is this thesis of James. What treasures

one finds just by taking time to study the meaning of words. The Christian is not happy and merry because of what is going on around him but in spite of it. There is an inner world which is molded by God who made it and who directs it. That is why one finds Christians passing through the valley of the shadow of death singing. It is not because of what they experience in the valley, but because of the inner state of their minds and hearts. One may be surrounded by all the pleasures of the world, by health and strength and riches, and yet be an old grumbler. The outside does not necessarily determine the inside. The Bible never promises the Christian favorable outward conditions, but inner tranquillity and peace of heart. What is the Christian who has inner well-being supposed to do? "Let him sing." (Ibid)

**Moffatt** says ""Elsewhere in the N.T. the word to sing praise refers to public worship, and always, if the usage in classical Greek and Greek O.T. be decisive, to songs with a musical accompaniment."

**He is to sing praises** - This is a command in the [present imperative](#), a command which is the fruit of one filled with the Holy Spirit "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." (Eph 5:18, 19<sub>±</sub>)

**Brian Bell** - Don't feel guilty because you're not experiencing the hardships of others! - There is a time to weep & a time to laugh; a time to mourn & a time to dance. If you're joyful, James says, Let it out! - Sing praises & thank God for the blessings He's given you

**Davids** comments "James, then, wants God remembered in all situations, good as well as bad. Turning to God in need is half the truth; turning to him in praise either in the church or alone when one is cheerful (whatever the situation) is the other half. God is not just an errand boy to help human need, but one who deserves worship and praise at all times (Phil. 4:4, 6; Eph. 5:20; 1 Th 5:16–18) and a person to whom one may relate no matter what the circumstance." (NIGTC-James)

**Grant Osborne** has a summary of this final section of James 5:12-16 - In James 5:12 the speech-problem is oath-taking; in James 5:13 the speech-answer is praying. Prayer is the central theme of the passage. We rely on God rather than ourselves and surrender every situation (including ourselves) to him. The progression of the prayer is first hierarchical (centering on the leaders, James 5:14), then corporate (James 5:14-15), then individual (James 5:16-18). In this paragraph there are four points: (1) the general need for prayer and praise (James 5:13); (2) the response to illness with prayer and anointing with oil (James 5:14-15a); (3) the response to sin with confession (James 5:15b-16a); and (4) the power of righteous prayer to make a difference, using the model of Elijah (James 5:16b-18). James begins with a general introduction to the topic that centers on the two extreme situations in the church (note the central en humin, "among you"; NLT, "of you"): suffering and happiness. These two function as a summary of the situation of the readers. (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary - James)

**Sing praises** ([5567](#)) (**psallo** from **psao** = touch lightly, twang, snap) means literally to pluck, to pull, to twitch, and so to strike the strings of an instrument. Then it comes to mean to sing to the accompaniment of a harp. **Psallo** is the same word from which we get the English "psalm." If all is well with our soul, we ought to sing.

**Hiebert** - The term leaves room for any kind of sacred song. In 1 Corinthians 14:15 and Ephesians 5:19 the term is used of singing praise to God in public worship, but here the reference is apparently to the individual expression of praise. James desires that God be remembered and praised in all situations, the good as well as the bad....Songs of praise to God are suitable not only when the heart is glad but also when trials and distress engulf us. Paul and Silas sang hymns to God while in prison with bleeding backs and feet fastened in the stocks (Acts 16:25). A vital faith can both sing and pray, whether the circumstances are sad or glad. ([James Commentary](#))

**Zodhiates** - Musicians who play upon an instrument were said to pluck the strings (psálloun chordás) or simply pluck (psálloun). The word came to signify the making of music in any fashion. Because stringed instruments were commonly used both by believers and heathen in singing praises to their respective gods, it meant to sing, sing praises or psalms to God whether with or without instruments (Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament)

**Psallo** - 4x in the NT - Ro 15:9<sub>±</sub> = "I will sing to Your Name"; 1 Co. 14:15 = **I will sing** with the spirit and **I will sing** with the mind also."; Eph. 5:19<sub>±</sub>; Jas. 5:13

**Psallo** in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) - Much more frequent than in the New Testament, and as one might guess very common in the Psalms!

Jdg 5:3; 1 Sa 16:16; 1 Sa 16:17; 1 Sa 16:23; 1 Sa 19:9; 2 Sa 22:50; 2 Ki 3:15; Ps 7:17; Ps 9:2; Ps 9:11; Ps 13:5; Ps 18:49; Ps 21:13; Ps 27:6; Ps 30:4; Ps 30:12; Ps 33:2; Ps 33:3; Ps. 47:6; Ps 47:7; Ps 57:7; Ps 57:9; Ps 59:17; Ps 61:8; Ps 66:2; Ps 66:4; Ps 68:4; Ps 68:25; Ps. 68:32; Ps 68:33; Ps 69:12; Ps 71:22; Ps 71:23; Ps 75:9; Ps 92:1; Ps 98:4; Ps 98:5; Ps 101:1; Ps 104:33; Ps 105:2; Ps 108:1; Ps 108:3; Ps 135:3; Ps 138:1; Ps 144:9; Ps 146:2; Ps 147:7; Ps 149:3

**Gilbrant** on **psallo** - In classical Greek the verb psallō means "to pluck, pull" in a very general sense, such as to "pluck out a hair" or "to pull a bowstring." It is also used with a technical meaning "to play a stringed musical instrument" on which the strings were

plucked rather than struck with a mallet. The usage of *psallō* in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#), however, introduces an expansion of its meaning. Twelve times it is used to translate Hebrew *nāghan*, "to play a stringed instrument," in keeping with its technical use in classical Greek. However, nearly 40 times the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) uses *psallō* to translate Hebrew *zāmar*, "to make music in praise of God" (Brown-Driver-Briggs, "zmr," Hebrew Lexicon, p.274). This Hebrew word describes music made either by musical instruments or vocally, and thus can also mean "to sing." In some Old Testament contexts it is apparent that *zāmar/psallō* refer to singing that is accompanied by instruments (cf. Psalm 66:4). As a result, the meaning of *psallō* began to be extended to include "to sing," and by Modern Greek it had come to mean this exclusively (Bauer).

**Horatio Spafford** ([read the full Wikipedia article](#)) was an incredible example of a man clearly empowered by [the Holy Spirit enabling him to obey the command](#) to **sing praises** in spite of unspeakable losses). Wikipedia has the following description:

In 1871, Spafford's 4-year-old son died of [Scarlet fever](#). Two years later, business demands kept Spafford from joining his wife and four daughters on a family vacation in [England](#) where his friend [D. L. Moody](#) would be preaching. On November 22, 1873, while crossing the [Atlantic](#) on the [steamship Ville du Havre](#), the ship was struck by an [iron sailing vessel](#)<sup>[4]</sup> killing 226 people, including all of Spafford's daughters. His wife, Anna, survived the tragedy. Upon arriving in England, she sent a telegram to Spafford that read "Saved alone."<sup>[5]</sup> As Spafford sailed to England to join his wife, he wrote "[It Is Well with My Soul](#)" (play this beautiful vocal version - you will have either chills or tears - so powerful especially when you read the full story of Horatio Spafford)."

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll,  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well with my soul.

(Refrain:) It is well (it is well),  
with my soul (with my soul),  
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.  
(Refrain)

My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to His cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!  
(Refrain)

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:  
If Jordan above me shall roll,  
No pain shall be mine, for in death as in life  
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.  
(Refrain)

And Lord haste the day, when the faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,  
Even so, it is well with my soul.  
(Refrain)

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**Gary Hall** - Physical illness sometimes results from unconfessed sin – but not always (see Jn 9:1-4). The following prayer is for physical healing (based on Js 5:13-16).

"Heavenly Father, I lift my need up to You now. I openly confess my need for physical healing, especially my need for spiritual

healing. So I repent for my sins and by Your grace I will not continue in them. According to Your will, I seek Your gift of faith to be physically healed. However You answer this prayer, I know things will go differently because I've called out to You. I promise to invest my health in Your kingdom, not merely spend it on my own wishes. My supreme desire – in suffering or in health – is to be more conformed to the image of Your Son. So my prayer is, all of my health for all of Your glory, in the healing name of Jesus." (Discovery Bible)

## Five-Finger Prayers

Today's Scripture & Insight: James 5:13–18

Prayer is a conversation with God, not a formula. Yet sometimes we might need to use a "method" to freshen up our prayer time. We can pray the Psalms or other Scriptures (such as The Lord's Prayer), or use the ACTS method (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication). I recently came across this "Five-Finger Prayer" to use as a guide when praying for others:

- When you fold your hands, the thumb is nearest you. So begin by praying for those closest to you—your loved ones (Phil. 1:3–5).
- The index finger is the pointer. Pray for those who teach—Bible teachers and preachers, and those who teach children (1 Thess. 5:25).
- The next finger is the tallest. It reminds you to pray for those in authority over you—national and local leaders, and your supervisor at work (1 Tim. 2:1–2).
- The fourth finger is usually the weakest. Pray for those who are in trouble or who are suffering (James 5:13–16).
- Then comes your little finger. It reminds you of your smallness in relation to God's greatness. Ask Him to supply your needs (Phil. 4:6, 19).

Whatever method you use, just talk with your Father. He wants to hear what's on your heart. By: Anne Cetas [Our Daily Bread](#). [Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

### Reflect & Pray

Father, give me the wisdom to know how to pray for others.

It's not the words we pray that matter; it's the condition of our heart

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### Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. —James 5:13

Prayer in trouble implies of sense our impotence, an acknowledgment of God's power, and dependence on him for help. These considerations reveal the suitability of this duty and the probability of success, if we pray in a right spirit.

When we are troubled, let us pray for pardon. Perhaps some crime may be the cause of our suffering, which must be pardoned before we can obtain deliverance: "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him ... and the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14–15).

In troubles we should pray for counsel. "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, ... and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). While clouds and darkness roll round us, we know not which way to go, but when we acknowledge God in the duty of prayer, he directs our steps.

We should pray for a sanctified use of trouble. When trouble is sanctified, it promotes our good, the good of others, and the glory of God. God neither troubles in vain nor willingly grieves us. After an affliction is over, it is pleasing to reflect that, like silver in the furnace, we have lost nothing but dross. In this way, and for this very purpose, God often afflicts his children.

It is lawful in our troubles to pray for deliverance. When the Israelites wandered in a solitary way and when their soul fainted with hunger and thirst, "Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress" (Ps. 107:6).

Those in trouble should ask others to join with them in prayer. United petitions are powerful. The prayers of saints ascend before the throne of God like holy incense, and speedy answers are sent down. Hurry, then, to call in the pious, and set great value on their prayers.

But prayer in troubles does not set aside the use of other means. Every means that prudence may dictate should be used, but all should be mixed with prayer, that God may give his blessing, without which all our endeavors will prove useless.

The character of the divine Being is an encouragement to pray in troubles. He is full of compassion and waits to do his needy creatures good. He pities people in their troubles, and his arm is stretched out to help and deliver. —Jonathan Edmondson (From *Take Heart* by Diana Wallis)

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## Pray First!

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. —James 5:13

Today's Scripture: James 5:13-18

A Bible teacher asked his class this question: "When you are in trouble, what do you most often do first?" He gave them three answers from which to choose:

1. Take care of it yourself.
2. Call a friend and talk it over.
3. Ask God for help.

Only two people in the class of 35 indicated that they prayed first. Most of them chose number 1. Several chose number 2. My guess is that these responses are typical.

James wrote, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray" (5:13). Too often, prayer is not our first response to trouble. We may try to figure out a solution by ourselves, using our own skills or financial resources. Or we may turn to our friends. When none of that helps, we finally get around to praying.

Not only that, we don't pray about the trouble very long or pause to consider what the Bible has to say about our response to our problem. It's amazing, though, what can happen when we take time to pray about the issue and listen to God speak through His Word. He will give us a fresh way to look at our situation, and help us to be more Christlike.

James said, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (5:16). So always pray first! —By: David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### Reflect & Pray

#### Thinking It Over

When you face a problem, where do you turn first?

How has prayer helped you during difficult times?

How has God answered your prayers?

Prayer should be our first response—not our last resort.

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#### Related Resources:

- [Colossians 1:9 Commentary](#)
- [Colossians 4:12 Commentary](#)
- [Devotional on Prayer](#)
- [Guide to Praying for Missionaries](#)
- [Pithy Prayer Phrases](#)
- [Prayer - Greek Words for Prayer](#)
- [Prayer Devotionals and Illustrations](#)
- [Prayer Hymns and Poems](#)
- [Prayer Quotes](#)
- [Prayer Quotes, Devotionals and Illustrations](#)
- [Praying for People from Every Tribe, Tongue, People and Nation](#)
- [Praying His Word](#)
- [Praying in the Spirit](#)
- [Spurgeon's Gems on Prayer](#)
- [What is fervent prayer \(James 5:16\)?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about prayer for the sick?](#)

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James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Then **he must call** for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

NET James 5:14 Is anyone among you ill? He should summon the elders of the church, and they should pray for him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

GNT James 5:14 σθενε τις ν μν, προσκαλεσθω τον πρεσβυτρούς της κκλησας κα προσευξανθωσαν π ατν λε φωνας [ατν] λα ντ ν ματτο κυρου.

NLT James 5:14 Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord.

KJV 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:

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

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

CSB James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they should pray over him after anointing him with olive oil in the name of the Lord.

NIV James 5:14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

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

NRS James 5:14 Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.

YLT James 5:14 is any infirm among you? let him call for the elders of the assembly, and let them pray over him, having anointed him with oil, in the name of the Lord,

NAB James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in the name of the Lord,

NJB James 5:14 Any one of you who is ill should send for the elders of the church, and they must anoint the sick person with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him.

GWN James 5:14 If you are sick, call for the church leaders. Have them pray for you and anoint you with olive oil in the name of the Lord.

BBE James 5:14 Is anyone among you ill? let him send for the rulers of the church; and let them say prayers over him, putting oil on him in the name of the Lord.

- **Then he must call for the elders of the church** Ac 14:23 15:4 Tit 1:5
- **they are to pray over him:** 1Ki 17:21 2Ki 4:33 5:11 Acts 9:40 Acts 28:8
- **anointing him with oil:** Mk 6:13 16:18
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Disclaimer** - James 5:13-15, especially verses 14-15 are difficult (perhaps even impossible) to interpret dogmatically and there are widely divergent interpretations by highly qualified expositors and much controversy regarding the application of the variegated interpretations. All this to say, these notes will attempt to be as objective as possible, but make no pretense at resolving the differences of interpretation and application. [Click for Pastor Steven Cole's](#) excellent summary of the interpretations/controversies in these passages.

**Is anyone among you sick?** - In James 5:13 the troubles were from an external source, but here they are from an internal source (our own body). The first question is are they "**sick**" in a physical sense or are they "**weak**" in a spiritual sense? As Cole [notes below](#), a number of respected expositors favor this as referring to spiritually weak (For this interpretation see [MacArthur's sermon on James 5:13-18](#)). My humble opinion is that that interpretation seems less likely than interpreting this as referring to those who are physically sick. Of course this is not to say that their physical sickness does not have a spiritual component or relationship to unconfessed sin (cf sin and sickness clearly linked in 1 Cor 11:30). (See Constable's note below) This distinction is important because if we say "**sick**" then the prayer is for physical healing, but if say **weak** (spiritually) the prayer is for spiritual healing and even for salvation (for James uses the verb **sozo**, which obviously can mean to save, but also is used to mean to heal or make well [used that way at least 14x]).

**Constable** alludes to a link between **sin** and **sickness** commenting that "It is not surprising to find that James dealt with physical sickness in this epistle. He referred to the fact that departure from the will of God sets the Christian on a course that, unless corrected, will result in his or her premature physical death (James 1:15, 21; James 5:20<sup>+</sup>). Physical sickness sometimes results from sinful living. It is that kind of sickness that seems to be in view in James 5:14-20. (ED COMMENT: While there can be a link between personal sin and subsequent illness, one CANNOT conclude that if one is sick, it is always because of their sin. As a medical doctor who has seen literally 1000's of cases of a variety of illnesses, I would find such a conclusion utterly absurd and ill-founded at best. Not to mention that such an inane conclusion could be very hurtful to many who are sick, which in due time will be almost everyone reading this note!)

**Osborne** has an interesting note that ties the physical with the spiritual - In this section, a holistic understanding of illness in the community is expressed; it seems clear that the **physical**, the social (community), and the **spiritual** sides are integrated, with **prayer the integrating power behind both aspects of healing** (Ibid)

Some have seen in this passage justification for "**extreme unction**" (a practice begun in the eighth century), but that is taking great liberty with text and making it say something James simply does not say. And so I agree with **Steven Cole** who says that James 5:14-15 "are the basis for the Roman Catholic sacrament of **extreme unction**....I am baffled at how the idea of a priest anointing a dying person so that his soul will be ready for heaven ever came out of a text about healing, not dying. (For more discussion of this interpretation see [What is extreme unction / last rites?](#))

**Douglas Moo** comments on **astheneo** - "Sick" or "ill," and this is the sense almost universally given the word in this verse. [But a few scholars have proposed an alternative meaning](#), "to be spiritually weak." The word can have this sense, and so can the word translated "sick" in the NIV of v. 15 (kamnō; see the notes there). Moreover, the language of v. 16—"that you may be healed"—usually has a spiritual connotation in the NT. And other key words in the context, it is argued, point in the same direction: "**save**" (sōzō; translated "**make well**" in the NIV) and "**raise up**" in James 5:15. What James is describing, these scholars contend, is a person who is spiritually weak. The spiritual leaders of the church need to pray for this person so that his or her fervor for the Lord might be restored. An exhortation to pray for such a situation would fit very well at the end of a letter that has regularly chastised its readers for just such spiritual lassitude. But the usual view, adopted in virtually all modern English Bibles, that James is speaking here of physical illness, **is overwhelmingly likely...** The verb "**save**" is frequently used in the Gospels to denote the restoration of those who are ill; as is, as we might expect, the verb "**heal**" (James 5:16). But perhaps the most striking parallel comes with the reference to "**anointing with oil**." Only once else in the NT is the practice mentioned, and then as a means of physical healing (Mark 6:13+). (Pillar NT Commentary - James)

**Sick** (770) **(astheneo** from **asthenes**) = without strength, powerless from **a** = without + **sthenos** = strength, bodily vigor) primarily means to be feeble or weak, to lack strength and then comes to mean to be diseased, to be sick, or [to be infirm](#). **Astheneo** is also used figuratively to refer to "spiritual weakness" of some sort (primarily weak in faith) as summarized below.

**Moo** makes a good point in regard to the figurative interpretation writing that "When **astheneo** refers to spiritual weakness, this meaning is made clear by a qualifier ("in conscience" in 1 Cor. 8:7; "in faith" in Ro 14:1, 2) or by the context. More importantly, in the NT material that has exercised the greatest influence on James's vocabulary and theology (the Gospels), **astheneo** always denotes physical illness (Matt. 10:8; 25:36, 39; Mark 6:56; Luke 4:40; John 4:46; 5:3, 7; 6:2; 11:1, 2, 3, 6)." (Ibid)

**Astheneo** refers to physical sickness and spiritual weakness. Here are the uses (minus those uses found only in the *Textus Receptus*):

**SICK** - Mt 10:8 = "heal the **sick**" Mt 25:36 = "I was **sick**"; Mk 6:56 = "they were laying the **sick** in the market places"; Lk 4:40 = "all those who had any who were **sick** with various diseases"; Jn 4:46 = "whose son was **sick**"; Jn 5:3 = "lay a multitude of those who were sick," Jn 5:7 = "the **sick** man"; Jn 6:2 = "signs which He was performing on those who were **sick**"; Jn 11:1 = "certain man was **sick**"; Jn 11:1 = "Lazarus was **sick**"; Jn 11:3 = "he whom You love is **sick**"; Jn 11:6 = "He heard that he was **sick**"; Acts 9:37+ "she fell sick and died"; Acts 19:12+ "the **sick**"; 1 Cor 11:30 = "For this reason (taking communion without confessing sins) many among you are **weak** and sick, and a number sleep."; 2 Cor 12:10 = "when I am **weak**"; Phil 2:26 = "heard he was sick"; Phil 2:27 = "indeed he was sick to the point of death"; 2 Ti 4:20 = "Trophimus I left sick at Miletus

**WEAK** - Acts 20:35+ = "help the **weak**"; Ro 4:19 "**weak** in faith"; Ro 8:3 = "what the Law could not do, **weak** as it was through the flesh"; Ro 14:1 = "**weak** in faith"; Ro 14:2 = "he who is **weak** eats vegetables"; 1 Cor 8:9 = "stumbling block to the **weak**" 1 Cor 8:11 "he who is **weak** is ruined"; 1 Cor 8:12 = "wounding their conscience when it is **weak**"; 1 Cor 9:22 = "To the **weak** I became **weak**, that I might win the **weak**;" 2 Cor 11:21 = (COULD BE PHYSICAL OR SPIRITUAL) "I must say that we have been **weak** by comparison." 2 Cor 11:29 = (PHYSICAL OR SPIRITUAL?) "Who is **weak** without my being **weak**?" 2 Cor 13:3 "not **weak** toward you," 2 Cor 13:4 "are **weak** in Him"; 2 Cor 13:9 = "we rejoice when we ourselves are **weak**"

2 Cor 10:10 = "personal presence is **unimpressive**";

**Then he must call for the elders of the church** - This is the third command in these two verses (v13-14) - pray, sing, call. The sick one should call out to the leadership of the local assembly. Note that they are to call the elders rather than go to the elders suggest they are very ill! "The hesitancy of people to ask for or to seek prayer from the leadership of the church in such circumstances is a true mystery." (Guzik)

See Acts 11:30+ and Acts 14:23+ where elders were leaders in the early church. **He must call** is a command in [aorist imperative](#) to call the elders. Don't delay. While James does not state, this command does not call for us to call the elders with every sore not every sore throat

**Must call for** (summon) ([4341](#)) (**proskaleo** from **pros** = to + **kaleo** = to call) is used only in the middle voice and means call to oneself - to call alongside or summon to one's side is the idea. James places the responsibility on the sick person to call for aid.

**Elders** ([4245](#)) (**presbuteros** the comparative form of **présbus** = an old man or an ambassador) referred to men who were older or more senior with no negative connotations but rather a sense of venerability. **Presbuteros** is transliterated into English as "presbyter" (a leader in one of the Jewish communities--especially a member of the [Sanhedrin](#)--or of the early Christian churches) and from which the word "priest" (from Late Latin presbyter) was derived. This is the only use of elders by James.

**Rick Renner** adds - presbuteros ("elders") was used to depict Israel's most visible spiritual representatives of the people, such as the ruling members of the local synagogues and the teachers and instructors of the Law who taught in the synagogues. The term itself expresses that these elders are not to be looked upon as common members of a local assembly; rather, they are deemed worthy of honor due to the position they hold. In Acts 11:30, Luke uses the word presbuteros ("elders") to describe those who exercised authority and who formed the leadership of the Jerusalem church. In First Timothy 5:17, 19 and in Titus 1:5, the apostle Paul uses the term presbuteros to depict those who held officially appointed church offices. In Titus 1:5, Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders in the church; then he follows up in Titus 1:7 by giving Titus the requirements for these elders. However, when Paul begins to list these requirements, he exchanges the word "elder" with the word "bishop." This is the Greek word episkopos, which definitely points to the ordained leaders of a local assembly. This means that the elders whom the sick believer is to call upon should be among the official or ordained ministers of the local church.

#### Related Resources:

- [What are the duties of an elder in the church?](#) - Excerpt - They pray for the sick. "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" (James 5:14). Since the elders have to meet specific qualifications, their lives are godly and therefore the sin in their lives is minimal and is confessed regularly; therefore, they are used to pray for the sick. One of the necessities in prayer is praying for the Lord's will to be done, and they are expected to do this.
- [Calling the Elders to Pray - Daniel Hayden - Bibliotheca Sacra 138 \(1981\)](#) - Excerpt - Bible students differ as to the exact meaning of the words on healing in James 5:13–18. Many are reluctant to advocate a contemporary use of the "gifts of healings" in the church; but all are unanimous in feeling that the passage is calling for dealing in some way with physical illness among God's people. Exactly how the teaching of James is to be implemented by the elders of the church, or precisely what circumstances warrant its application, is a matter of debate. Many see this passage as a formula for church practice which obligates God to grant requests for physical healing. The result of this view is that many Christians are disappointed when God does not answer what He seemingly had promised. God does obligate Himself with His Word, but not to man's misinterpretations of His Word. This writer suggests that James 5:13–18 is not referring to physical sickness at all, but is rather giving instruction for dealing with persons who are discouraged or depressed.

**Hiebert** on the **church** - "The church," mentioned only here in James, connects these elders with the local Christian community. In 2:2, James referred to his readers as assembling in their "synagogue." "In the very earliest period all Christians, both Jew and Gentile, used both expressions." Among the Greeks, "church" (ekklēsia) was a common term denoting a consultative assembly, but for the Jews, familiar with the term from their Septuagint, it was a word that designated the Israelites assembled for religious purposes (e.g., Deut. 4:10). The compound noun, composed of *ek*, "out of," and the substantival form of the verb *kaleō*, "to call," denotes "a called-out assembly"; besides the idea of separation, it also has the thought of those called out as assembled to form a distinct group. In the New Testament the term at times includes all believers in Christ, the church universal (e.g., Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22; 3:10); but here, as usually, it denotes the Christians living in one place (e.g., Acts 5:11; 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 4:15). ([James Commentary](#))

**Kurt Richardson** says "Believers who are sick and infirm are to receive special attention by the whole congregation." (NAC - James)

Why did James not say to call for those who had the **spiritual gift of healing** (1 Cor 12:9, 28)? **Douglas Moo** comments that "while not denying that some in the church may have the gift of healing, James **encourages all Christians, and especially those charged with pastoral oversight**, to be active in prayer for healing." (Ibid) (Bolding added)

**And they are to pray over him** - Pray is in the [aorist imperative](#) meaning they are to this without delay. Don't put it off. ([See discussion of the Need for dependence on the Holy Spirit to obey this command](#)). The phrase **over him** suggests they are standing over the sick person who is lying down because of the severity of the illness. This is the only place in the NT this phrase "pray over" is found. Some suggest that this pictures the elders as either holding their hands out over the person or actually laying their hands on the person. Either way the posture is less important than the prayer!

**Pray** ([aorist imperative](#)) (4336) see note above on [proseuchomai](#) Renner adds this word "represents the act of drawing near to God and passionately petitioning Him to perform a specific act. This is important, for it lets us know that this is not referring to a casual, token prayer but one that is deeply felt and passionately prayed. The tone in Greek again reflects the idea of urgency." (Sparkling Gems from the Greek)

**Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord**- This literally reads "after having oiled him." Whether this anointing is to be done before or during the praying is not clear from the Greek text. **Oil** most likely refers to olive oil. What does the oil signify? There is no clear consensus. (1) One group favors a **medicinal** purpose as with good Samaritan (Lk 10:34+). Oil was used in ancient times as "cure" for a number of maladies from toothache to paralysis! As a physician I wonder how much of the "cure" was placebo effect? (2) A second interpretation was that the oil served a **sacramental function**, which culminated in the Catholic use of oil in so-called extreme unction (arose about 852 AD) performed exclusively by a priest for the purpose of ostensibly removing any remnant of sin and of strengthening the soul of the dying (cf [Euchelaion](#)). Clearly this reflects an incorrect interpretation of James 5 which gives no Biblical support to this imaginative, mystical, man-made aberration of truth! This is what happens when we do not base our application on **Sola Scriptura**. (3) Thirdly, the anointing is seen by many as **symbolic of consecration**, which has a Scriptural basis (e.g., Ex 28:41), but the question then would be for what purpose is the sick person being consecrated? Perhaps it means that the sick "person is being set apart for God's special attention and care." (Moo) Others like Cole say the oil symbolized the Holy Spirit. Perhaps, but this seems like a great deal of suppositional expositing with little genuine yield. I like what Moo's final statement that "anointing, **whatever it signifies**, is clearly subordinate to James's main concern in these verses: prayer."

**Osborne** on **oil** and **anointing** - Jesus never used it so far as we know and mentioned it only with respect to his own anointing by the Spirit (Luke 4:18+, from Isa 61:1) and in the parable of the Good Samaritan, where oil and wine were put on the wounds of the hurt man (Luke 10:34+). In the New Testament **anointing** is mentioned with respect to the anointing of Jesus (Acts 4:27+; Acts 10:38+; Heb 1:9+) and of the believer (2 Cor 1:21). These symbolic anointings show God's special blessing, power, and status placed upon the person. (Ibid)

**Zodhiates** says "In James 5:14, the word (anointing) is used in the aorist participle aleípsantes which means that the rubbing with oil was the medicinal means applied prior to prayer."

**Hiebert** - The practice of **anointing** the sick with **oil** was known among the Jews in Palestine and was used in connection with exorcism. The significance of this anointing of the sick by the elders is differently understood. Some view the act as the application of a healing remedy. The efficacy of olive oil as a medical agent was well known. But others view the anointing as symbolic, "to represent the healing power or presence of God." Some, more precisely, view the oil as "a beautiful symbol of the Holy Spirit who lives in and watches over the saint (James 4:5)." **Davids** holds that the anointing "is an outward and physically perceptible sign of the power of prayer, as well as a sign of the authority of the healer (Mark 6:13+)." That James did not regard the oil as the healing agent is clear from his assertion in verse 15 that **the prayer of faith** heals the sick. Mitton suggests that the use of the oil "was supplementary aid for awakening faith." ([James Commentary](#))

It is notable that the main verb in this section is the command to **pray** and **anointing** is a participle, so clearly **anointing** is not the main thrust but **praying**.

**Anointing** ([218](#)) ([aleiphō](#)) means to rub, to cover over, besmear (Mt. 6:17; Mark 6:13; 16:1; Luke 7:38, 46; John 11:2; 12:3; James 5:14; Sept.: Gen. 31:13; Ezek. 13:10–12). It was used of anointing of any kind. In the Septuagint it was used of the anointing of priests (Ex. 40:15; Num. 3:3). Jesus is never mentioned as carrying out anointing in any of His many healings. However **anointing** is used by the 12 Disciples in Mark 6:13+ "they were casting out many demons and were **anointing** (aleiphō) **with oil** many sick people and healing them."

**Zodhiates** on **aleiphō** versus **chrīo** (anoint) - Contrast **chrīo** (5548), anoint as pertaining to the sacred and

religious. **Aleíphō** is used indiscriminately of either oil or ointment (aleiphē in Mod. Gr.) in all actual anointings. The Jew was accustomed not only to rubbing his head with oil or ointment at feasts in token of joy, but also both the head and the feet of those whom he wished to distinguish by special honor. In the case of sick persons and also of the dead, they rubbed the whole body (see Gen. 50:2; Ps. 23:5; 45:7; 104:15; Eccl. 9:8; Luke 7:37, 38; John 19:40). This was also done by the Greeks and Romans. Sometimes this rubbing was used for physical relaxation after washing (Sept.: Ruth 3:3; 2 Sam. 12:20; Dan. 10:3; Mic. 6:15). In the NT, the product used was either oil or ointment (Luke 7:38, 46). It is also used of rubbing a pillar (Sept.: Gen. 31:13), or captives (Sept.: 2 Chr. 28:15), or daubing a wall with mortar (Sept.: Ezek. 13:10–12, 14, 15), and in the sacred sense of anointing priests (Sept.: Ex. 40:13; Num. 3:3). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT)

**Morris** - There is nothing magical in the anointing oil but served as a spiritual symbol representing God's hoped-for anointing of the sick person by the Holy Spirit in order to bring him back to active service for the Lord. This symbol recalled how priests and kings had been anointed in ancient Israel, symbolizing their divine call to service.

#### Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about anointing oil?](#)
- [What was olive oil a symbol of in the Bible?](#)
- [What is extreme unction / last rites?](#)

**In the Name of the Lord** ([kurios](#)) - In all that His **Name** represents -- the full authority that exists in the person being named. The idea is God is behind the entire situation and guiding the process. What is done must be consistent with Who God is and doing it in His **Name** is tantamount to doing what the Lord Himself would have done. So when we pray in the **Name** of the Lord, we ask what the Lord would ask, what He would want, what His will would be in that situation. (cf Jn 14:13, 14). Acts gives us several related examples of the use of the Name of the Lord - Acts 3:6+, Acts 3:16+, Acts 4:10+

**Renner** suggests that "By praying in Jesus' name, a believer actually stands in the physical place of Jesus who is in Heaven, acting on His behalf and operating in the authority He has vested to that believer as His official representative. Thus, this prayer is prayed by someone who understands he is standing by the bedside of the sick on Jesus' behalf. As the representative of Jesus Christ, this elder has the right to call on the power of God and to exercise all the authority that belongs to Jesus. What would Jesus do if He were physically present in the situation? That is precisely what this leader is to do as he ministers to the sick in the very stead of the Master." (Sparkling Gems in the Greek)

**Name** ([3686](#)) ([onoma](#)) means that by which something or someone is called or known. Thus a name constitutes the distinctive designation of a person or thing. However in antiquity the **name** meant more than it does today. We use **a name** as little more than a distinguishing mark or label to differentiate one person from another, but in the ancient world the **name** signified not only the person's identity but the inherent character of the person designated by the name. Stated another way, in ancient times, one's whole character (title, reputation, person) was implied in the **name**. For example, in John 1:12<sub>+</sub> to "believe in His **Name**" (cf Jn 3:18, 20:31, 1Jn 3:23) is to believe (with a belief that results in a new, "circumcised" heart) in all Jesus is and all He has accomplished to effect our eternal redemption (Heb 9:12<sub>+</sub>).

**Osborne** writes "I would add **fasting** (See discussion in [Matthew 6:16-18 Commentary](#)) on the part of the elders as well. All three—prayer, fasting, anointing with oil—call the people of God into ever more serious reliance on God and his loving, healing presence in the person's life. All are valuable, even essential, tools of spiritual surrender of the community to the will of God." (Ibid)

**Davids** - The calling out of Christ's Name in baptism (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:16; Acts 10:48; Acts 19:5 Mt. 28:19, two of which use v; cf. Jas. 2:7) and in the rites of healing and exorcism was normal in the early church (Mk. 9:38; Lk. 10:17; Acts 3:6, 16; Acts 4:7, 10; Acts 9:34); this practice indicates that in calling out the name the baptizer/healer/exorcist was acting as the representative of God calling upon the power of God (cf. H. Bietenhard, TDNT V, 277, who also gives background). It is God's power (i.e. κύπιος in James 5:15) which will heal the person. Thus one finds three actions in the healing rite: prayer, anointing, and the calling out of the name of Jesus. This is not a magical rite, nor an exorcism (cf. Dibelius, 252), but an opening to the power of God for Him to intervene whether or not the demonic is involved. (NIGTC - James)

**Ryrie** summarizes this section - God may heal directly, through medicine, or in answer to prayer, as here. The oil is a symbol of the presence of God (cf. Ps. 23:5); it may also have been considered medicinal in James's day (cf. Luke 10:34), though hardly as being effective for all diseases. Prayers of faith are answered not simply because they are prayed in faith but only if they are prayed in the will of God (1 John 5:14). God does not always think it best to heal (cf. 2 Cor. 12:8; 2 Tim. 4:20). Here the healing is dependent on confession of sin. Historically, the Roman Catholic sacrament of extreme unction developed out of this practice, but the significance is entirely changed, for the Roman Catholic rite has death in view, not recovery. **Some** understand the word **sick** in James 5:14 to

refer to **spiritual**, not **physical**, weakness and the different word translated **sick** in James 5:15 to mean "weary" (these meanings are legitimate). **Thus the discouraged person will be restored to spiritual vigor by the elders' prayer and anointing**

**Related Resource:**

- [Name of the LORD is a Strong Tower: Summary](#)
- Play the beautiful simple chorus "[Sing Praises to Your Name](#)"

## GOOD SUMMARY OF THE VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF JAMES 5:14-15

Steven Cole

### IS JAMES REFERRING TO SPIRITUAL OR PHYSICAL HEALING?

A few commentators (**Ron Blue**, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, ed. by John Walvoord & Roy Zuck [Victor Books], 2:834-835; **John MacArthur**, Moody Founder's Week Conference Messages, 1988, pp. 103-113; **Douglas Moo** mentions a few more, The Letter of James [Eerdmans/Apollos], p. 236, note 45) argue that these verses are **not talking about physical healing** at all. Rather, they argue that "sick" (James 5:14) should be translated "weak," referring to **spiritual weakness**. They observe that James uses a word here for "anoint" that refers, not to ceremonial anointing, but to more everyday anointing. Thus they interpret the anointing with oil to refer to the Jewish practice of using oil as a means of bestowing honor or refreshment, especially on guests. They point out that the word "sick" in James 5:15 is literally, "weary." So the idea is that a person who is spiritually weak and weary would call for the elders. They would anoint him with oil (modern application: encourage and refresh him), pray with him, and the Lord will restore the one who is weary and raise him up. If he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. So they interpret this as spiritual restoration, not physical healing. I admit that this interpretation is attractive in that it gets us off the hook with a difficult interpretive problem, namely, that the common interpretation of verse 15 seems to guarantee physical healing.

**But almost all commentators and Bible translators understand this text to refer to physical healing, not to spiritual restoration.** When the verb "weak" is used to refer to spiritual weakness, it is made clear by some qualifier, such as, "weak in conscience" (1 Cor. 8:7) or, "weak in faith" (Ro 14:1, 2). Also, in the Gospels, where James draws most of his vocabulary and theology, the word always denotes **bodily illness** (Moo, p. 237). While the verb, "anoint," is used of common anointing, it is also used of the disciples' ceremonial anointing of the sick in their healing ministry (Mark 6:13). So, while I would agree that through prayer elders should encourage and refresh those who are spiritually weak, I'm not convinced that that is what this text means. But, that leaves us with a difficult problem, namely, that this text seems to guarantee healing for those who follow the procedure. Before I address that (I'll warn you now that I don't have an easy answer), let me make several observations.

(1) **First, note that it is the sick person who is to call for the elders, not vice versa.** The elders are not omniscient! Don't expect that we should know when you need prayer! Tell us!

(2) **Second, these verses intertwine physical illness with sin.** James does not assume that the person is sick because of sin, but he indicates that it **may** be a cause ("if he has committed sins"). So before the sick person calls for the elders, he needs to search his heart and confess all known sins to the Lord. He should be prepared that the elders may ask, "Are you aware of any unconfessed sins in your life?"

(3) **Also, because the sick person is calling for the time of busy men (there is no such thing as a non-busy elder!), this should be reserved for serious matters, not for routine illness.** Galatians 6:2 says that we are to "bear one another's burdens." The word used there refers to excessive burdens. But Galatians 6:5 says, "For each one will bear his own load." The word "load" refers to normal burdens or responsibilities. If your illness or injury is something that affects your entire life (life-threatening, or chronic pain or weakness, or it prevents you from working or fulfilling other duties, or one that is overwhelming you spiritually), then you should probably call for the elders.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ANOINT WITH OIL?

James 5:14 directs the elders to "**pray over him**" ("over" may imply laying on of hands), "**anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.**" There are several interpretations suggested.

(1) **Some say that it refers to the ancient medicinal application of oil to wounds** such as the Good Samaritan did with the

wounded traveler (Luke 10:34). Thus, they think the verse means, “**Pray and use medical means.**” While I agree that we should use medical means, I am not convinced that James is saying that.

(2) **Others say that the oil was a physical expression of concern that was used to stimulate the faith of the sick person**, much as Jesus used mud to anoint the eyes of the blind man in healing him (John 9:6-11).

(3) That is possible, but I prefer the view that the oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, who is the divine agent in healing. James says that it is the prayer of faith that heals, not the oil, but obviously, it is not prayer, but God, to whom we pray, who heals.

## WHAT IS THE PRAYER OF FAITH?

But now we must deal with the questions, ‘**What is the prayer of faith?**’ And, ‘**Is James guaranteeing healing in every case?**’

(1) **Some resolve this by saying that the gift of miraculous healing was limited to the apostolic age, and so this doesn’t apply anymore.** While the gift of healing may have been only for that period, that gift is not in view here. Obviously, God can and does heal miraculously in every age when it is His will to do so.

(2) **Others go to the other extreme and say that it is always God’s will to heal. If you aren’t healed, you must not have prayed in faith.** This view is not only false, but cruel! If this were true, no faithful believer should ever get sick or die. But that doesn’t square with either reality or the New Testament. Paul was not healed of his thorn in the flesh and he did not heal Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-30) or Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20). He urged Timothy to drink a little wine for his frequent stomach ailments (1 Tim. 5:23), not to claim his healing by faith. And, we all eventually get sick and die.

(3) **Some argue that the prayer of faith is a special subjective assurance that is given to the elders that God will heal in this situation.** My problem with that view is that it’s very easy to be mistaken, and if you give someone false hope that God will heal, but He does not heal, you have just added to the person’s misery.

Every prayer should be a **prayer of faith**, because we should not ask anything of God unless we believe that He is able to grant it (James 1:6-8; Heb. 11:6; Mark 11:22-24). But—and here, for me, is the difficult thing about applying this—we do not know God’s sovereign will in advance. If I had been one of John the Baptist’s followers, praying for his release from prison, I would not have thought it to be God’s will for the drunken King Herod to lop off John’s head. But it was His will. With Peter, I would not have thought it to be God’s will for Jesus to get crucified. But, thank God, it was His will! I would not have thought it to be God’s will for five young, dedicated missionaries to get murdered in the jungles of Ecuador. But it was God’s will.

So my understanding of this verse is, if you are seriously sick or have an injury that is debilitating, call the elders for prayer. We will come and talk to you about your situation. We may ask if you are aware of any sins that you need to confess. We will anoint you with oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, who is mighty to heal. We will pray with you, believing that God can and does heal. But, we must submit to His sovereign will, which we seldom can know in advance. If He chooses to heal you, give Him the glory, because it wasn’t the oil, it wasn’t our prayers or faith that healed you. It was God! ([Sermon](#))

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**A Specific Application** - James 5:13-15 - This familiar passage is a difficult passage. Many suffering Christians have tried in all sincerity to follow the instructions given here, yet have not been healed. This may be because the promise has a specific, rather than general, application.

First, “is anyone afflicted?” This word means “troubled,” (James 5:13) referring especially to persecution or deprivation. For such a person, the admonition is: “Let him pray.” Assuming that he is right with God, and is praying in His will (1 John 5:14,15<sup>+</sup>), he can expect either the **needed relief** or the **needed grace** (ED: IN OTHER WORDS THE GRACE TO MAKE IT EVEN THOUGH THE AFFLICION DOES NOT RELENT).

Secondly: “Is there one who is sick?” Here the Greek word actually refers to physical illness. However, the context shows that this particular sickness has come specifically “since (the true connotation of ‘if’) he have committed sins.” There are “many weak and sickly” believers who have so persistently refused to judge and confess their sins (1 Corinthians 11:30-32) that the Lord finally has laid them aside with sickness or injury. The remedy is for such a person to call for the church elders (not the reverse), and “let them pray” (after he has first openly confessed and repented of his sins) in faith anointing him with oil. Then the promise is that, if the elders themselves have faith and are right with God, the Lord will forgive his sins and raise him up.

Furthermore, their prayer of faith will “save the sick.” The Greek word in this case means “wearied,” rather than “ill,” and it tells us that the sinner has been delivered from the heavy burden of guilt which had wearied his soul, as well as the illness which had weakened his body. There are other reasons for illness besides unrepented sin, when other courses of action are indicated, but this is a wonderful promise of both spiritual and physical healing when sin is the problem. - HMM Our Daily Bread

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## **Oil on Troubled Waters**

Larry Miley grew up in the northeast corner of the Ivory Coast, where his father was a missionary physician. When he was 14, he was laid low by a bout of malaria, and his father gave him an injection. All seemed well at first, and Dr. Miley returned to his hospital, not knowing the injection would produce a severe reaction that would take Larry to the edge of the grave.

Mrs. Miley was preparing for her sewing and Bible class on the verandah when a blood-curdling scream filled the house. Rushing through the door, she saw her daughter Lynette standing in near hysteria before Larry, who seemed disoriented, confused, his twitching eyes recessing deeply into their sockets.

"There's something wrong with my eyes," Larry gasped. "Help me!"

As Lynette ran for her father, Mrs. Miley ushered Larry to the bed and covered his grotesque eyes with a washcloth. Just as the doctor arrived, Larry's body arched in a violent spasm. Like a woman in the throes of birth pains, regular contractions wracked him, sending him convulsing this way and that, threatening to cut off his respiration. Larry's heart grew fainter. Hours passed. The spasms grew stronger, and Larry became weaker. Dr. Miley knew well that Larry's survival in that remote outpost was unlikely.

Suddenly he remembered that James 5:14 says, "Call for the elders of the church." The only "elders" were fellow missionaries living nearby, and they were summoned at once. Eddie and Sandra Payne, Howard and Willie Gage, Lynette and her brother Lynn. As they knelt by the bed and prayed, Dr. Miley anointed Larry with the prescribed oil.

Mrs. Miley recalls: Slowly, like oil being poured over troubled waters, a deep calm replaced the suffocating fear. We sensed before we even raised our eyes that the crisis had passed. Larry was asleep and slept peacefully through the night.

Next day as I prepared the noon meal, Larry came bouncing into the kitchen. "I'm all well now," he announced brightly, "so I think I'll go hunting." (Robert Morgan - From this Verse)

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**James 5:15 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.**

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GNT James 5:15 καὶ εχτὶς πιστεως σοσι τὸν καὶ μνοντα καὶ γερε ατὸν κριος· καὶ μαρτας πεποιηκε, φεθ σεται ατ.

NLT James 5:15 Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.

KJV 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.

ESV James 5:15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

ASV James 5:15 and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him.

CSB James 5:15 The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will restore him to health; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

NIV James 5:15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

NKJ James 5:15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

NRS James 5:15 The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

YLT James 5:15 and the prayer of the faith shall save the distressed one, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if sins he may have committed, they shall be forgiven to him.

NAB James 5:15 and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

NJB James 5:15 The prayer of faith will save the sick person and the Lord will raise him up again; and if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

GWN James 5:15 (Prayers offered in faith will save those who are sick, and the Lord will cure them.) If you

have sinned, you will be forgiven.

BBE James 5:15 And by the prayer of faith the man who is ill will be made well, and he will be lifted up by the Lord, and for any sin which he has done he will have forgiveness.

- **and the prayer offered in faith:** Jas 5:13,16 1:6 Mt 17:20,21 21:21,22 Mk 11:22-24 16:17,18 1Co 12:28-30
- **if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven hi** Isa 33:24 Mt 9:2-6 Mk 2:5-11 Joh 5:14 1Co 11:30-32 1Jn 5:14-16
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## RESULTS OF THE THE PRAYER OF FAITH

Respected pastor Kent Hughes entitles this section "The Divine Prescription for Healing in the church."

**And** (kai) is a connective particle and clearly connects the prayer of the **elders** in the previous verse with the description of the prayer in this passage. In other words, this is the prayer spoken by the elders around the one who is sick.

**Osborne** points out that "It is not that these **elders** had more prayer power than others, but rather that they had spiritual authority in the lives of the members of the flock and were known for their piety. It is natural to call upon the mature spiritual leaders in times of distress." (Ibid)

**The prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick** - Young's Literal has "the prayer of the faith shall save the distressed one." The definite article ("the") precedes **prayer** and points to a specific **prayer** and the addition of "in faith" makes it very specific. Note there is no word for "offered" in the Greek text (having been added by the NAS), so the NET is more accurate rendering it "the prayer of faith." This exact expression is found only here in the NT. James also shifts from the more common verb for prayer (proseuchomai) to the rare verb euche (see below).

**Hiebert** adds that "The genitive **"of faith,"** describing the prayer, may be understood in two different ways. It may be understood as denoting "the body of truth known as 'the faith,'" but it is more probable that the reference is to the faith exercised by the elders in their prayer over the sick. Davids characterizes it as "the prayer which expresses trust in God and flows out of commitment to him." To achieve effective results such prayers must be grounded in the divinely revealed realities of the biblical "faith."

**Hiebert** also has an interesting comment on the **prayer of faith** (not sure I agree but offer it for consideration) - We agree that such prayer for the healing of the sick should properly be offered with the condition "if the Lord will." But James's unconditional language seems best understood in accepting that "the prayer of faith" cannot "be prayed at will, but that it is given of God in certain cases, to serve His own loving purposes, and in strict accordance with His sovereign will." Thus, it is not just an ordinary prayer for another, however good and sincere it may be, but the prayer prompted by the Spirit-wrought conviction that it is the Lord's will to heal the one being prayed for. But, as Moo remarks, "such faith cannot be 'manufactured,' however gifted, insistent, or righteous we are." Whenever God in His wisdom does not grant immediate healing, such a service still has deep spiritual value for the believer in that it openly relates his illness to the will of God for him. ([James Commentary](#))

**Ron Dunn** has this thought on **the prayer of faith** - Concerning the phrase "the prayer of faith": Does James mean that when we pray for healing, the healing will come if we truly believe? It has already been noted that believing prayer does not always result in bodily healing. What, then, does James mean? James, I believe, is referring to a specific kind of prayer, a prayer produced by the divine impartation of faith. In the Greek text there is a definite article before "prayer"—"the prayer of faith." The use of the definite article in Greek carries special significance: "The basal function of the Greek article is to point out individual identity." The prayer of faith is more than praying in faith. It is a special and specific prayer that God enables us to offer by imparting faith for healing. It is a God-infused faith and a God-inspired prayer. (Will God Heal Me?)

**Peter Davids** on **the prayer of faith** - It is a **prayer of faith**, i.e. the prayer which expresses trust in God and flows out of commitment to him, for only such prayers are effective (cf. Jas. 1:5-8; 4:3; Mk. 2:5; Mk 5:34; Mk 10:52; Mk 6:6; Acts 14:9, where **faith** or lack of it is the condition for healing). The **faith** is that of the one who prays, i.e. of the elders who have ex officio healing power, not that of the sick person (who may or may not be in a condition to exercise much of anything). (NIGTC-James)

**Prayer** ([2171](#))**(euche** from [euchomai](#)) = to wish, pray, vow) usually refers to a vow but can refer to a prayer, denoting a strong, fervent wish or petition. The related verb is used by Paul in Acts 26:29+ where he says " "I **would wish** to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains." (cf similar use in Ro 9:3+).

**Louw-Nida** on vow - promise to God that one will do something, with the implication that failure to act accordingly will result in divine sanctions against the person in question." Paul cut his hair at Cenchreae due to a vow he had taken (Acts 18:18+) and

many believe this was a modified Nazarite vow. )

**Euche** - 3x in NT - Acts 18:18+ = "he was keeping a **vow**."; Acts 21:23+ = "We have four men who are under a **vow**"; Jas. 5:15

**Zodhiates** on the use of **euche** in James 5:15 - The basic meaning of the word **euché** is wish or vow. When it is addressed to God, it becomes **proseuché**, from **prós** <4314>, toward, and **euché**, wish. When we pray to God, we **wish** that He would intervene to permit something in our lives that we feel is proper and right. For the Christian, every prayer ought to be the result of his faith in God through Christ. In the NT, faith is the acceptance of God's revelation for man and the means whereby that revelation for each individual is appropriated. **A Christian's wish is for God's will to take place in his life, even in the case of sickness. It is of such a wish coming from faith that James is speaking about in regard to a sick brother. In praying for the sick, we must exercise faith that God is able to heal, and we are free to express our wish for the healing of the sick. However, once we have expressed our wish, we must allow God to do as He pleases and in that find the satisfaction in faith.** (Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament)

**Faith** (4102)(**pistis**) in this context means belief directed toward God and His power to restore.

Of course the question arises, when we do what James prescribes, is God obligated to heal the person? Clearly the answer is "No." If that were true, it would mean that men can control God which is absurd. Does prayer make a difference? Absolutely, even if God does not heal, it is never a loss for believers to be in conversation and communion with their Father. Why He answers "Yes" in some cases and "No" in others is a mystery that may be answered when we are in Heaven. Either way God is always good and His way is always right. See [Kent Hughes example](#) of from life of the great missionary Amy Carmichael.

As **Osborne** says "Prayer does not guarantee that God will say yes, for he is sovereign over our lives; we are not sovereign over Him!"

**Restore** (4982)(**sozo**) means to rescue, liberate, keep from harm an in this context means to free from disease. See also the identical phrase "your faith has made you **well**" in all of these passages - Mt 9:22; Mk 5:34+; Mk 10:52+; Lk 8:48+; Lk 17:19+; Lk 18:42+.

James uses **sozo** 5x the first three in the context of spiritual salvation - Jas. 1:21; Jas. 2:14; Jas. 4:12; Jas. 5:15; Jas. 5:20. While there is a group of expositors (Blue, MacArthur, et al) who interpret the sick person as spiritually sick and therefore interpret "sozo" as conferring salvation, it is notable that salvation is NEVER seen to be the result of prayer in the New Testament. This interpretation would also be difficult to resolve with the fact that the Lord will raise up the sick person, a statement that clearly favors healing from physical sickness over spiritual sickness.

The **ESV** (CSB, KJV, ASV) has the prayer "**will save the one who is sick**" NIV = **will make the sick person well**

**Osborne** - James used **sozo** (save) here for "heal," a word often used in situations where the healed person was touched spiritually as well as physically (Matt 9:21-22; Mark 5:28, 34; 10:52). The major thrust here is physical healing, but still the presence of "in faith" as in Mark 10:52 brings in the spiritual side. When James adds that the sick person will be "raised up," he undoubtedly means to be "raised" from the sickbed (Davids 1982:194: "Standing up or rolling up one's bed was the natural consequence of healing"). This calls for a new boldness in prayer, an expectation that God's healing presence will be experienced in a new way. This was more natural in the first century, when people had a far greater awareness of the spiritual realm and the power of God at work in their lives. In our more materialistic age we must constantly challenge one another to greater faith and dependence on God. There should be a deeper level of anticipation of God at work in the midst of our prayers. (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – Volume 18: James, 1-2 Peter, Jude, Revelation)

**Sick** (2577)(**kamno**) means primarily to be weary or discouraged in one's soul (as in Heb 12:3<sup>+</sup>) or to be sick or ill as in James (See also Gilbrant's note below on use of **kamno** in classic/secular Greek). **Zodhiates** adds that "When used in connection with **asthenéō**, to be sick, it suggests the common accompaniment of sickness, weariness of mind which may hinder physical recovery (James 5:15)" (Ibid) Those who favor this section as referring to "[spiritual illness](#)" see **kamno** as supporting that interpretation as the person who is "sin sick" is virtually always weary and discouraged by their heavy load of sin. **Hiebert** adds that "The verb (**Kamno**) primarily means "to be weary, fatigued" (cf. Heb. 12:3). Here it pictures the physical weariness and exhaustion that prostrating sickness produces."

**Kamno** - James 5:15, Heb 12:3<sup>+</sup>

**Kamno** in [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) - Job 10:1; Job 17:2

**Gilbrant** - The classical usage of **kamnō** ranges from "being tired because of work" to "being tired in spirit (troubled)"; from "**being sick**" to "**being dead**." The Septuagint only uses the word twice in canonical literature, and both have the idea of "being tired in

spirit" or "weary" from concern and ideological struggle (cf. Job 10:1; 17:2). This word occurs three times in the New Testament. The first occurrence is Hebrews 12:3 where the persecuted Christian is not to become "weary" in soul or to faint. He is to continue the struggle (even as Jesus struggled) since the Christian has not resisted to the point of blood by his wrestling against sin. The second New Testament occurrence is at James 5:15 where the context equates "being sick" (astheneō [764]) with "being physically weary." In Revelation 2:3 the church of Ephesus was commended for enduring persecution, "for my (Jesus) name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted."

**And the Lord will raise him up** - Note it is not the oil which raises but the Lord who raises. In the present context **egeiro** is used figuratively meaning to "raise up" a person from illness (but not raise him from the dead), thus restoring them to health. If you believe that this section deals with spiritual healing, obviously this would refer to spiritual restoration, to awaken the one somnolent from sin into a renewed state of spirituality, lifting one's spirits so to speak.

**Hiebert** - "Will raise him up" virtually repeats "will save" in the previous statement, meaning that the sick person will be raised up from his sickbed. Although the verb is used of the future bodily resurrection, that connotation is not involved here. ([James Commentary](#))

**Will raise** (1453) (**egeiro**) means to rise (stand up) from a sitting or lying position (Mt 8:26, 9:5), to awaken from sleep (Mt 8:25), figuratively to "awaken" from death (rise up). **BDAG** - "to raise up from sickness, raise up = restore to health (the sick person is ordinarily recumbent)"

**And if he has committed sins** - The "if" is a condition of 3rd class which indicates the possibility of sin being related to the sickness. But as stated repeatedly in this section it is critical to note that not all sickness is related to sin! We live in a fallen world, and diseases are a natural consequence of our fallen state, but specific diseases in an individual are not necessarily the result of personal sin.

**Hiebert** - The added assurance, "If he has sinned, he will be forgiven," recognizes that the sickness may be due to sin. Mitton notes that whenever sickness strikes, this is a possibility that "haunts the human mind." Whenever sickness does come, it is desirable for each believer to examine himself to determine before the Lord if the sickness is due to personal sin. But the construction used by James makes clear that this is not always the case. It is wrong to assume that whenever a believer becomes sick it is due to sin in his life. But whenever that may be the reason, the words of James assure the sick person that the situation is not hopeless. ([James Commentary](#))

**Davids** on **if he has committed sins** - The rest of the verse connects the possibility of sin to the illness. Such a concept is not unknown in the NT (Mk. 2:5; Jn. 5:14; 9:2–3; 1 Cor. 11:30) and it was well known in Judaism (Job; 2 Ki. 20:3; 2 Ki 19:15–19) (Ibid)

**Committed** (4160) (**poieo**) means to carry out, to bring about, to accomplish. The **perfect tense** speaks of the enduring effect of the sins (note sins plural). It is interesting that committed is in the **perfect tense**, indicating a past completed action (the commission of the sins) and a present ongoing effect. The implication is that "the sinner is now abiding under the consequences of his sins in the past." (Hiebert)

**Osborne** comments "The spiritual side of the equation is stated in the second half of James 5:15: **If you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.**" As before, this forgiveness is not automatic, but it does mean that God heals spiritually as well as physically (contra Moo 2000:242-246, who takes it only of physical healing). It is common to interpret this of instances where the illness is the result of past sin (as in Mark 2:11-12; 1 Cor 11:27-30; so Blomberg and Kamell, Hiebert, Johnson, Stulac). To be sure, this link is denied in John 9:1-3; 11:4; 2 Corinthians 12:8-10, but "if... any sins" leaves the possibility open in particular instances. **Most likely James has both ideas in mind—those sins that led to the illness as God's judgment, as well as sin in the person's life in general. As in Jesus' healing miracles, God comes upon the person both physically and spiritually, and those healed will often get right with God and experience forgiveness of sin through the experience. "The statement is simple and straightforward: two promises, one for the body (the obvious, pressing need), the other for the soul. The person will be healed totally" (Davids 1982:195).**" (Ibid)

**Sins** (plural - implies repeated offenses) (266) (**hamartia**) literally conveys the idea of missing the mark as when hunting with a bow and arrow (in Homer some hundred times of a warrior hurling his spear but missing his foe). **BDAG** - (1) to dismiss or release someone or something from a place or one's presence. (2) to release from legal or moral obligation or consequence - cancel, remit, pardon. Later **hamartia** came to mean missing or falling short of any goal, standard, or purpose. **Hamartia** in the Bible signifies a departure from God's holy, perfect standard of what is right in word or deed (righteous). It pictures the idea of missing His appointed goal (His will) which results in a deviation from what is pleasing to Him. In short, sin is conceived as a missing the true end and scope of our lives, which is the Triune God Himself. As **Martin Luther** put it "Sin is essentially a departure from God."

**They will be forgiven him** - As [explained below](#) **forgiven** depicts the sins as "sent away" and no longer held against him. If you believe this section refers to [prayer for spiritual healing](#), then this statement would lend support to that interpretation (See MacArthur

below). If you are in the majority who believe this passage refers to physical healing, then you would interpret this by saying that this person's illness had some relationship to their sins. This is a slippery slope of course because not all illness is related to sin, for Jesus even affirmed this in John 9 declaring "It was neither that this man sinned (MAN BORN BLIND - Jn 9:1-2), nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him." (John 9:3)

**MacArthur** writes "James's note that if one of the spiritually weak believers has committed sins, they will be forgiven him provides further evidence that this passage does not refer to physical healing. The Bible nowhere teaches that all sickness is the direct result of an individual's sins. Spiritual defeat, however, is often both the cause and result of sin. When that is the case, the antidote is to confess those sins to God and obtain His forgiveness." (James Commentary)

**Davids** - The statement is simple and straightforward: two promises, one for the body (the obvious, pressing need), the other for the soul. The person will be healed totally. (Ibid)

**Will be forgiven** (863)(**aphiemi** from **apo** = prefix speaks of separation, putting some distance between + **hiemi** = put in motion, send) is a great word for us as sinners to fully understand for aphiemi conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation and was a legal technical term for divorce! It meant to cancel, to remit or to forgive sins. Literally **aphiemi** means to send from one's presence, to put away, put off, a wonderful, liberating picture of what God supernaturally accomplishes when we confess our sin. (Mt 6:12, 14, 15<sup>±</sup>; Mk 3:28; Lk 12:10+; Ro 4:7<sup>±</sup>; 1 Jn 1:9<sup>±</sup>; 1 Jn 2:12<sup>±</sup>) Notice that **forgiven** is in the **passive voice** underscoring the fact that the forgiveness must come from without not within, from God, not the person forgiving themselves (as we often hear taught).

**Aphiemi** conveys the basic idea of total detachment, total separation from a previous location or condition. In secular Greek **aphiemi** initially conveyed the sense of to throw and in one secular writing we read "let the pot drop" (aphiemi). From this early literal use the word came to mean leave or let go. This is the only use of **aphiemi** by James.

**Brian Bell** - Sometimes there is a direct relationship between personal sin & sickness. a) Story of David & Bathsheba (adultery, murder, refusal to repent) - Ps.32 is David's journal of this period. Ps.32:3,4 "When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer." Sometimes there is no direct relationship between personal sin & sickness. = "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him." (Jn.9:2,3) It is not God's will that everyone be healed. For example, Paul had the gift of healing but left Trophimus sick in Miletus; Epaphroditus almost died while ministering to Paul; Timothy had a stomach problem & frequent ailments; Paul asked God 3 times to remove his thorn in the flesh, that God said no to, but that His grace was sufficient for him. ([Sermon](#))

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**W A Criswell** comments on James 5:14-16 -

This passage has led to many erroneous teachings. The central theme of the passage is prayer. It is through the prayer of believers that divine aid and blessing are invoked. Oil was widely believed to have a medicinal value in biblical times (cf. Isa. 1:6; Luke 10:34) and is here used in this sense. The text is stating that the prayer of faith will heal and that medical means are to be used. God does occasionally, however, directly heal those who are ill. The believer has a right to ask for healing from the Lord, who revealed Himself to His people in Ex. 15:26 as Yahweh-Ropheka (Heb., "For I am the Lord who heals you"). God heals and often employs means in the process (cf. Isa. 38:21; Mark 6:12, 13; 1 Tim. 5:23). One excellent illustration of the activity of God in regard to sickness occurs in Acts 28, when Paul and Luke the physician are shipwrecked in Malta. The father of Publius was very ill, and Paul "went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him" (Acts 28:8+). The word used here to describe the miraculous healing by Paul is *iaomai* (Gk.). The others on the island who were sick were also brought to be healed (Acts 28:9+). The word used to describe their healing is from *therapeuo* (Gk.) and, together with the plural pronoun in Acts 28:10 ("they also honored us"), clearly indicates that medicine was practiced on them by Luke. God does heal with and without means. In fact, if there is healing, God does the healing. It may not be in God's will for healing to occur in a particular case. Believers are instructed to pray for healing, but they are also instructed to seek God's will (1 John 5:14) and are taught by Christ's example to pray, "nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). Note also 2 Cor. 2:7-10, in which Paul earnestly prays for healing that does not occur, and 2 Tim. 4:20, note, in which Paul's valued friend and helper, Trophimus, remains sick at Miletus. Yet Paul did not heal him.

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**Norman Geisler** on James 5:15 Used by the Cults

**MISINTERPRETATION:** Mind science cults such as Christian Science cite this verse in an attempt to show that we can shape reality by our thoughts. For "a mere request that God will heal the sick has no power to gain more of the divine presence than is always at hand. The beneficial effect of such prayer for the sick is on the human mind, making it act more powerfully on the body through a blind faith in God" (Eddy, 12). Is James referring here to mind cures?

**CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION:** James says nothing about healing that is like what the mind sciences claim. James

does not promise that all will be healed. Indeed, he implies this by saying prayer "can accomplish much." James says such prayer always has great value but he is not saying that it will always be effective to restore health (James 5:16). It is not the mind but the "prayer of faith" that James declares to be effective (v. 15). This prayer is not uttered by those who are sick, but by the elders who are called in to pray (vv. 15–16). It is not one's mind that heals him but the Lord in whose name the elders pray (v. 14). Sometimes even the most fervent and effectual prayer of a righteous man or woman does not bring healing, as the apostle Paul discovered when he sought God for his affliction (2 Cor. 12:7–10).

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**Kent Hughes** has the touching story from Elizabeth Elliot's classic biography of Amy Carmichael entitled *A Chance To Die*, which is apropos in light of James 5:14-15 and what in fact transpired. Hughes writes "Amy Carmichael, the turn-of-the-century missionary to India, described the attempted healing of one of her treasured coworkers, a woman named Ponnammal, who contracted cancer in 1913. Amy was, of course, aware of James' prescription to call for the elders of the church to anoint the ill and offer the prayer of faith, but she and her fellowship were not sure what to do. So they sought a sign asking that, if it was God's will, he would send someone to them who was earnest about James' prescription for healing. The person came—an old friend of hers from Madras. As her biographer Elisabeth Elliot describes it:

It was a solemn meeting around the sickbed, the women dressed as usual in their hand-loomed saris, but white ones for this occasion. They laid a palm branch across Ponnammal's bed as a sign of victory and accepted whatever answer God might give, certain that whether it was to be physical healing or not, He would give victory and peace. It sounds like a simple formula. It was an act of faith, but certainly accompanied by the anguish of doubt and desire which had to be brought again and again under the authority of the Master....

From that very day Ponnammal grew ... worse. The pain increased, and her eyes grew dull as she lingered for days in misery until she reached her limit and her "warfare was accomplished." (from [A Chance to Die, the Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael](#) -- if you have the courage to read this gripping, convicting biography, then please do so. It was one of the "heaviest" biographies I have ever read and actually I think I put it down because I was unable to keep reading the entire book. I still recommend it...if you dare!) (Preaching the Word - James)

Below are links to Kent Hughes sermons (Mp3 only)...

- [James 5:13-16 The Prayer of Faith 1](#)
- [James 5:16-18 The Prayer of Faith 2](#)

## Resources on Healing

### Gotquestions.org and other sources

- [Jehovah Rapha: \(Jehovah Rophe\) The LORD our Healer](#)
- [Will God Heal Us - A Re-Examination of James 5:14-16a - Evangelical Quarterly 61](#) - 1989 - 9 page article by Gary Shogren
- [Does God Want Me Well? James 5:13-16: Questions on Healing](#) - Booklet from Discovery House
- [What does the Bible say about prayer for the sick?](#)
- [What is a healing room? Are healing rooms biblical?](#)
- [What is divine healing?](#)
- ["Divine Healing" according to James 5 - William Malee](#) - Grace Theological Journal
- [Suffering According to James Christopher W. Morgan - SBJT 17.4 \(2013\): 20-33.](#)
- [Will God Heal Us? - A Re-Examination of James 5:14-16a - Gary Shogren - Evangelical Quarterly 61](#)
- [Does God Want Christians to Perform Miracles Today? John C. Whitcomb, Jr. - Grace Theological Journal](#)
- [Exegetical Brief: James 5:14—"Anoint Him with Oil" David P. Kuske](#) - Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly
- [How to Pray James 5:16](#) - Tabletalk Magazine
- [Righteous Prayer James 5:16–18](#) - Tabletalk Magazine
- [The Role of Prayer in God's Providence James 5:16b-18](#) - Tabletalk Magazine
- [Providence and Prayer James 5:16b-18](#) - Tabletalk Magazine
- [James 5:14: Should We Anoint the Sick With Oil?](#) - 8 Things to Consider - Robert J Morgan
- [What is the spiritual gift of healing?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about healing?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about energy healing / energy medicine / Reiki?](#)
- [Why will the nations need healing in the New Jerusalem?](#)
- [How can I receive emotional healing?](#)

- [How can I experience healing and recovery after an abortion?](#)
- [What is inner healing, and is it biblical?](#)
- [Why doesn't God heal everyone?](#)
- [What did Jesus mean when He told people, "Your faith has made you well"?](#)
- [Are faith healers for real? Does a faith healer heal with the same power as Jesus?](#)
- [Should Christians go to doctors?](#)
- [What is Christian Science?](#)
- [What is the story of the ten lepers in the Bible?](#)
- [What is the balm of Gilead?](#)
- [What does it mean that "by His stripes we are healed"?](#)
- [Why won't God heal amputees?](#)
- [What is a spirit of infirmity?](#)
- [Why did Jesus spit for some of His miracles?](#)
- [Is cessationism biblical? What is a cessationist?](#)
- [Should a Christian participate in reflexology?](#)
- [What is theophistic counseling, and is it biblical?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about crystals?](#)
- [What does the Bible have to say about holistic medicine?](#)
- [How should a Christian view prescription drugs?](#)
- [Counseling Related Questions](#)
- [What was in the shadow of Peter that healed people \(Acts 5:15-16\)?](#)
- [What happened at the Pool of Bethesda?](#)
- [Why did Jesus command people to not tell others of the miracles He performed?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about PTSD?](#)
- [How can I heal from the hurt of a broken relationship?](#)
- [What is shamanism?](#)

**James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.**

NET James 5:16 So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness.

GNT James 5:16 Ξομολογε σθε ο ν λλ λοις τ σ μαρτ ας κα ε χεσθε π ρ λλ λων πως αθ τε. πολ σχ ει δ ησις δικα ου νεργουμ νη.

NLT James 5:16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

KJV 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.

ESV James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

ASV James 5:16 Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.

CSB James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.

NIV James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

NKJ James 5:16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

NRS James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

YLT James 5:16 Be confessing to one another the trespasses, and be praying for one another, that ye may be

healed; very strong is a working supplication of a righteous man;

NAB James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful.

NJB James 5:16 So confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another to be cured; the heartfelt prayer of someone upright works very powerfully.

GWN James 5:16 So admit your sins to each other, and pray for each other so that you will be healed. Prayers offered by those who have God's approval are effective.

BBE James 5:16 So then, make a statement of your sins to one another, and say prayers for one another so that you may be made well. The prayer of a good man is full of power in its working.

- **confess your sins to one another:** Ge 41:9,10 Ex 10:16, 17, Lev 26:40-42, Nu 21:7, Josh 7:19,20, 2Sa 12:13, 19:19 1 Ki 8:47-49, Job 42:6, Ps 32:5, Ps 51:1-5, Ps 119:26, Pr 28:13,Jer 3:12, 13; Da 9:20-23, Mt 3:6, 5:24, Mk 1:5+ Mt 18:15-17 Lu 7:3,4, Lk 15:18-24, Lk 17:4 Acts 19:18; 1 Jn 1:9
- **pray for one another :** 1 Sa 12:23, Ro 15:30, Eph 6:18, Col 1:9 1Th 5:17,23,25 Heb 13:18
- **so that you may be healed:** Ge 20:17 2Ch 30:20 Lu 9:6 Ac 10:38
- **The effective prayer** Ge 18:23-32 19:29 20:7,17 32:28 Ex 9:28,29,33 17:11 32:10-14 Nu 11:2 14:13-20 21:7-9 De 9:18-20 Jos 10:12 1Sa 12:18 1Ki 13:6 17:18-24 2Ki 4:33-35 19:15-20 20:2-5 2Ch 14:11,12 2Ch 32:20-22 Job 42:8 Ps 10:17,18 34:15 Ps 62:8, Ps 145:18,19 Pr 15:8,29 Pr 28:9 Jer 15:1 29:12,13 Jer 33:3 Da 2:18-23 Da 9:20-22 Ho 12:3,4 Mt 7:7-11 21:22 Lu 11:11-13 Lk 18:1-8 Joh 9:31 Ac 4:24-31 Acts 12:5-11, 1 Peter 3:12,1Jn 3:22
- **of a righteous man can accomplish much:** Ro 3:10 5:19 Heb 11:4,7
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## INVOLVEMENT IN ONE ANOTHER'S SPIRITUAL LIFE

Osborne writes that "The thrust (James 5:16) is that we need to be involved in one another's spiritual lives, and that includes acknowledgment of sins.

**Therefore** (oun) is a term of conclusion. What is James concluding? Hiebert says "**Therefore**" (oun) establishes the thought connection with what precedes. In view of the efficacy of intercessory prayer in the circumstances just described, James now appeals for its wider use."

**Confess your sins to one another** - **Confess** is in the **plural** so now James is speaking to the body at large. Confession is to be an activity the entire body of Christ participates in! (**THOUGHT** - Is this true in your church?) Confession of sin is more than a mere acknowledgment of sin in the life. The one I hear most often is "Lord I confess my pride." While that's not bad, it is somewhat general. What sins did your pride cause you commi? And so **confession** is first of all primarily an agreeing with God as to all the implications that enter into the fact that we have sinned against Him and His will for our life. And make no mistake, we we sin, it is always **against God** (cf Ge 39:9b, Lev 6:2, Lev 26:40, Nu 32:23, 2 Sa 12:13, 24:10, Pr 8:36, Ps 51:4+, Ps 41:4, Isa 59:2, Lk 15:21+ = note order; Acts 5:4+), It is looking at sin from God's point of view, and acting accordingly. It also includes putting away of that sin (Repentance). It means the determination to be done with that sin (also inherent in the idea of repentance). In Proverbs 28:13± we read "He who conceals his transgressions **will not prosper** (Lxx = euodoo = things will not turn out well, will not succeed!), But he who **confesses** and **forsakes** (Hebrew = 'azab; cf Repents) them will find compassion (Hebrew = racham)."

**Hiebert** points out that "the reciprocal pronoun "each other" (**one another**) with both verbs stresses a mutual activity where the members are equal, regarded as brethren. The activity called for "is mutual and brotherly, not official or sacerdotal." James' words offer no valid basis for the practice of auricular confession.

**Kent Hughes** has some wise words regarding confession and specifically the value of confessing to another believer - "Regarding confession, the essential, primary, and continual confession of all Christian souls must be to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men" (1 Ti 2:5, 6a). **No human being can forgive another's sin. Absolution is in the hands of Christ alone Thus there is no basis here for the institution of confession to a priest or other religious leader or forgiveness by them.** Notice that the confession is mutual—"to each other," which also effectively rules out confessing to an elite priesthood. Having said this, there is a place for Spirit-directed mutual confession between believers. Prior to World War II in Nazi Germany, Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer conducted an underground seminary for the training of young pastors in Pomerania, where he shared a common life with about twenty-five students. His experience produced a now famous spiritual classic, Life Together, in which he documents the Biblical insights gained from that experience. In the fifth and final chapter of the book, "Communion and Confession," ([scroll down to page](#)

[112](#)) he gives some reasons for the practice of mutual confession. **Primary among them is the isolation that sin brings. Sin drives Christians apart and produces a hellish individualism—a deadening autonomy.** Says Bonhoeffer, "Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him." **But confession to a fellow brother or sister destroys this deadly autonomy. It pulls down the barrier of hypocrisy and allows the free flow of grace in the community.** The other main benefit of confession is that it brings healthy **humiliation.** Bonhoeffer goes on: "Confession in the presence of a brother is the profoundest kind of humiliation. It hurts, it cuts a man down, it is a dreadful blow to pride. To stand there before a brother as a sinner is an ignominy that is almost unbearable. In the confession of concrete sins the old man does a painful, shameful death before the eyes of a brother." Thus confession helps to promote a poverty of spirit which is acceptable to God: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3+). There are, of course, other reasons for mutual confession, the most obvious being explicitly stated in our text: mutual confession enhances mutual prayer and makes possible the bearing of one another's burdens (Galatians 6:1, 2+). We must also mention the value of spiritual accountability, which always follows the confession of one's sins to a mature brother or sister. How much sorrow would be avoided if this were commonly practiced today by both clergy and laity! I am thinking particularly of young men fallen to sensuality who would have been saved from tragedy had they gone to a godly older brother and confessed their sin, thereby obtaining accountability and prayer. ([Preaching the Word – James: Faith That Works](#)) (Bolding Added)

Note that **confess** is a command in the [present imperative](#) which calls for believers to practice a lifestyle of confession (so to speak). James is saying in essence "make a habit of confessing your sins!" John expresses a similar idea in 1 Jn 1:9± were "**confess**" is in the [present tense](#) calling for this to be the believer's habitual practice **THOUGHT** - Is this your daily or at least frequent practice?) We can obey the command (not 1 Jn 1:9 in [present tense](#)) only as we are submissive and sensitive to the leading of the indwelling Holy Spirit Who convicts us of sin but also gives us the desire and the power to confess that sin (Php 2:13NLT±). This is amazing grace indeed! ([See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!") In addition the [middle voice](#) emphasizes we as an act of our our will (voluntarily) are to initiate the act of confession and participate in the results of the confession. Middle voice conveys the reflexive sense - we **ourselves** confess (NOT we confess to *ourselves*!)

**Hiebert** - The sins confessed seem naturally to relate to their wrongdoings "against other brethren, which spoil the fellowship one with another and make it difficult, if not impossible, for them to worship together as the people of God." They also may include sins that burden the conscience of the one confessing and concerning which he feels the need for brotherly intercession for victory. Unconfessed sins have an upward as well as outward impact on the life of a believer. Such sins block the pathway of prayer to God and hinder interpersonal relations. Confession of sin is a Christian duty and a powerful deterrent to sin. ([James Commentary](#))

**Confess** (1843)([exomologeo](#) from **ek** - wholly out from or **ex** = out or intensify meaning [implies full, frank, open confession, openly or publicly] of [homologeo](#) - to say the same thing about) means to speak the same thing that another speaks, to fully agree with someone else or to confess. And as noted the "ex" prefix conveys the thought of an open, frank, and full confession. And the implication is that James is calling for frank confession of specific sins (not a generalization like I often hear "Lord I confess my pride, etc"), but **NOT** in [lurid detail](#)! Cremer says it denotes full and unreserved confession or acknowledgment.

In his commentary **Opening Up James**, Roger Ellsworth sheds further light on why we should confess our sins to one another: "Confession should always be as wide as the sin. If we have sinned secretly, we should confess it to God. If we have sinned against someone else, we should confess it to God and to the person whom we have wronged. And if we have sinned publicly, we should confess it to God and in public" (Day One Publications, 2009, p. 162).

**Kent Hughes** addresses some dangers in "opening up" to one another - Psychologically needy persons sometimes use confession to get attention for themselves. Through the apparently spiritual medium of "confession" they can handcuff a captive audience as they relate the details of their sin with a deluded or feigned contrition (**ED: HAVE YOU EVER FELT DEFILED BY SOMEONE GIVING THE LURID DETAILS OF THEIR SIN? I HAVE AND THAT IS WHERE WE HAVE TO QUICKLY DRAW THE LINE! LURID DETAILS MAY EVEN CAUSE THE BROTHER OR SISTER TO STUMBLE AND ABSOLUTELY MUST BE AVOIDED!**) Confession can also foster spiritual exhibitionism, a perverted moral pleasure in airing one's laundry. The overly morbid can bend confession to become an excuse for unhealthy hyper-introspection. Ostensibly humble confession can also be used as a vehicle for spiritual aggression: "I want to ask your forgiveness for being bitter toward you over the years"—but what follows is not a confession, but an egregious assault. There are other dangers as well, making confession a pious work which becomes, in Bonhoeffer's words, "the final most abominable, vicious, and impure prostitution of the heart." Confession turned into religious routine is deadly! ([Preaching the Word – James: Faith That Works](#))

**Guzik** - Confession should be made to the one sinned against. "Most Christians display a preference for confession in secret before God, even concerning matters which involve other people. To confess to God seems to them to be the easiest way out. If offenders were really conscious of the presence of God, even secret confession of private sin would have a good effect. Alas, most offenders merely commune with themselves instead of making contact with God, who refuses their prayers under certain conditions. In the

words of our Lord, it is clear that sin involving another person should be confessed to that person." (Orr) (ED: Guzik quoted from [J Edwin Orr's book "Full Surrender" which is available for download here](#). Download the Pdf and go to chapter 3 which deals with "Confession.") (See all of [Guzik's guidelines on Confession below](#)).

## Related Resources:

- James 5:16 - [When we confess our sins to God, how detailed do we need to be?](#)
- James 5:16 - [Why should we confess our sins to one another](#)
- James 5:16 - [Do we need to confess our sins to those we have sinned against?](#)
- [Confessing our Sins Together - Ryan Griffith](#)
- [How Important Is It to Confess My Sin to Someone Other Than God? - John Piper](#)
- [Do we need to confess our sins to those we have sinned against?](#)
- [When we confess our sins to God, how detailed do we need to be?](#)
- [Why do we need to confess our sins if they have already been forgiven \(1 John 1:9\)?](#)
- [Why do we need to confess our sins if they have already been forgiven \(1 John 1:9\)?](#)
- [What is fervent prayer \(James 5:16\)?](#)
- [What is the key to effective prayer?](#)
- [E M Bounds - The Weapon of Prayer](#)
- [E M Bounds - Necessity of Prayer](#)
- [E.M. Bounds - Power Through Prayer](#)
- [E.M. Bounds - The Possibilities of Prayer](#)
- [E.M. Bounds - The Reality of Prayer](#)

Mutual confession  
must culminate  
in sympathetic intercession

**Hiebert** - Such mutual confession must culminate in sympathetic intercession: "and pray for each other." Without this resultant intercession, confessions may prove to be harmful; but when they secure faithful prayer support from trusted, spiritual brethren, they can be of great value in furthering victory and spiritual maturity. The mutual confession must give stimulus and direction to the mutual intercession. ([James Commentary](#))

**And pray for one another** - Don't miss the coordinating conjunction "**kai** (and)" which in context clearly connects these two "**one another**" statements. How sad when we confess our sin to "**one another**" and the other does not pray for us! Confession and prayer should be united if we would experience the supernatural physical and/or spiritual healing that the Lord desires for us to experience.

**George Brooks on pray for one another** - When church members remember one another in prayer, they cease to be selfish. They cease to only pray the prayer of "me," "my," and "mine." When each person prays for others, everyone is prayed for. Remembering one another in prayer helps church members to love one another. We will not sincerely pray for people we do not love.

**Pray** ([2172](#)) (**euchomai**) literally meant to speak out or utter aloud and came to mean as used by to express a wish. The idea can be to desire something, with the implication of a pious wish. To vow (this sense is primarily found in the Septuagint uses but is found in Acts 26:29). To pray, but in the NT the derivative **proseuchomai** is the more common verb for pray. **Euchomai** and **proseuchomai** are more general terms for prayer, while **deomai** conveys the sense of seeking to have a need met.

Paul uses the **imperfect tense** which pictures a repeated action or a continual action in the past. The Greek scholar **A T Robertson** says it is an idiomatic imperfect "I was on the point of wishing".

**So that you may be healed** - The purpose is clearly stated. Unconfessed sin saps the vitality from one's soul and spirit. The awful effects are often both spiritual and physical! This truth recalls King David's description of the deleterious effects of his sin with Bathsheba before he humbled himself and confessed -

How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! 2 How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! 3 **When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long.** 4 **For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.** 5 **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. Selah.** (Ps 32:1-5)

**Spurgeon** gives a description of the effects of David's unconfessed sin which should horrify each of us

and serve as an motivation (enabled by the Spirit) not to commit the sin in the first place!

[\(CLICK HERE for Spurgeon's comments on the effects wrought by David's confession in Verse 1 and Verse 2\)](#)

**When I kept silent about my sin** When through neglect I failed to confess, or through despair dared not do so, **my bones**, those solid pillars of my frame, the stronger portions of my bodily constitution, **waxed old**, began to decay with weakness, for my grief was so intense as to sap my health and destroy my vital energy. What a killing thing is sin! It is a pestilent disease! A fire in the bones! While we smother our sin it rages within, and like a gathering wound swells horribly and torments terribly.

**Through my roaring all the day long.** He was silent as to confession, but not as to sorrow. Horror at his great guilt, drove David to incessant laments, until his voice was no longer like the articulate speech of man, but so full of sighing and groaning, that it resembled the hoarse roaring of a wounded beast. None knows the pangs of conviction but those who have endured them. The rack, the wheel, the flaming fagot are ease compared with the Tophet which a guilty conscience kindles within the breast: better suffer all the diseases which flesh is heir to, than lie under the crushing sense of the wrath of almighty God. The Spanish inquisition with all its tortures was nothing to the inquest which conscience holds within the heart.

**For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.** God's finger can crush us---what must His hand be, and that pressing heavily and continuously! Under terrors of conscience, men have little rest by night, for the grim thoughts of the day dog them to their chambers and haunt their dreams, or else they lie awake in a cold sweat of dread. God's hand is very helpful when it uplifts (**ED: SEE - The Hand of the Lord**), but it is awful when it presses down: better a world on the shoulder, like Atlas, than God's hand on the heart, like David.

**My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.** The sap of his soul was dried, and the body through sympathy appeared to be bereft of its needful fluids. The oil was almost gone from the lamp of life, and the flame flickered as though it would soon expire. Unconfessed transgression, like a fierce poison, dried up the fountain of the man's strength and made him like a tree blasted by the lightning, or a plant withered by the scorching heat of a tropical sun. Alas! for a poor soul when it has learned its sin but forgets its Saviour, it goes hard with it indeed.

**Selah.** It was time to change the tune, for the notes are very low in the scale, and with such hard usage, the strings of the harp are out of order: the next verse will surely be set to another key, or will rehearse a more joyful subject.

**I acknowledged my sin to You.** After long lingering, the broken heart bethought itself of what it ought to have done at the first, and laid bare its heart before the Lord.

**And my iniquity I did not hide.** We must confess the guilt as well as the fact of sin. It is useless to conceal it, for it is well known to God; it is beneficial to us to own it, for a full confession softens and humbles the heart.

**I said.** This was his fixed resolution.

**I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.** Not to my fellow-men or to the high priest, but unto Jehovah; even in those days of symbol the faithful looked to God alone for deliverance from sin's intolerable load; much more now, when types and shadows have vanished at the appearance of the dawn. When the soul determines to lay low and plead guilty, absolution is near at hand; hence we read,

**And You forgave the guilt of my sin.** Not only was the sin itself pardoned, but the iniquity of it; the virus of its guilt was put away as soon as the acknowledgment was made.

**Selah.** Another pause is needed, for the matter is not to be hurried over.

[\(Treasury of David - Psalm 32 - click to read some of the comments by other writers Spurgeon quotes\)](#)

**Healed** (cured) ([2390](#))**iaomai** means to cure, to heal, to restore. **iaomai** is used literally of deliverance from physical diseases and afflictions and so to make whole, restore to bodily health or heal. To cause someone to achieve health after having been sick. In the passive it means to be healed or cured. Figuratively, **iaomai** speaks of deliverance from sin and its evil consequences and thus to restore (to spiritual good health), make whole, renew ([Mt 13.15](#)). In the passive, **iaomai** figuratively means to be restored, to recover

or to be healed as in 1Pe 2.24±.

**iaomai** refers primarily to physical healing in the NT (although clearly there is overlap because some of these instances involved demonic oppression - Lk 9:42+), and much less commonly to spiritual healing or healing (saving) from "moral illnesses" and the consequences of sin. When used in this sense **iaomai** has much the same meaning as **sozo**, to save, make whole, restore to spiritual health. Here are the uses of **iaomai** used with a **spiritual** meaning = Mt 13:15, John 12:40, Acts 28:27+ - preceding quotes from Isa 6:10+, 1Pe 2:24± = quote from Isa 53:5+.

It is interesting that most of the NT uses in the Gospels refer to **physical healing** by Jesus (excepting the physical healing that resulted by release from demonic oppression). However in the OT (Lxx) uses **iaomai** refers primarily to **spiritual healing** by the Messiah (Isa 53:5+, Isa 61:1, et al).

Presumably the fact that Luke was a physician explains why he made frequent use of **iaomai** (14/26x). The related word **iatros** (Mt 9:12 Mk 2:17+ Mk 5:26+ Lk 4:23+, Lk 5:31+, Lk 8:43+, Col 4:14±) is derived from **iaomai** and is actually the word used for "medical doctor" in modern Greece (cf English "iatrogenic" illness or malady caused by or secondary to medical treatment)! In ancient Greece this word group was extended from its medical use to convey a sense of restoration or to making good. The word **iatros** is also ascribed to several Grecian deities (Here is an interesting background article = [Healing deities, healing cults](#)).

## **FERVENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS PERSON IS VERY POWERFUL!**

The New Living renders it "The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." ESV has "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

As **Davids** says after James gives his charge to pray in the previous passages, he now "encourages their prayers with a statement of its effectiveness. The prayer of a righteous person does have great power!...It is the ordinary member in good standing, not just the elders or prophets, whose prayer is powerful, as the following example ([OF ELIJAH](#)) shows."

**Hiebert** points out that James 5:16b-18 "is distinguished from the previous injunctions by the absence of a connecting particle and its declarative contents. Following his calls for prayer (James 5:14-16a), James now encourages its use through his positive assertion (James 5:16b) and a vivid illustration of the mighty power of prayer (James 5:17-18)." ([James Commentary](#))

**The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much - Effective** is the Greek verb **energeo** which pictures these as "energetic" prayers and in the [present tense](#) speaks of persistent prayer. The "energy" for such praying is ultimately "generated" by the "dynamo" (cf [dunamis](#)) of the Spirit continually working within us as described in Php 2:13± where the same verb **energeo** is used two times!

"It is God Who is at **work** [[energeo](#) in [present tense](#)] = continually at work] in you, both to will and to work [[energeo](#) in [present tense](#)] = continually working] for His good pleasure"

The verb **can** is [ischuo](#) (see [below](#)) in the [present tense](#). **Accomplish** is **energeo** in the [present tense](#) indicating Spirit energized effective prayers are availng prayers! The energetic prayers of a righteous man or woman continually have power to **accomplish much!**

Regarding **effective prayer**, **Davids** cautions that James "does not mean that the harder one prays the more likely the prayer is to be answered!"

**Effective prayer** is prayer that relies on the Spirit's leading and empowerment. When this is transpiring, one is indeed praying powerfully for they are [Praying in the Spirit](#).

**Young's Literal Translation** - "Be confessing to one another the trespasses, and be praying for one another, that ye may be healed; **very strong is a working supplication of a righteous man!**

**Effective** (1754)[\(energeo](#) from **en** = in + **érgon** = work. English = energetic) means to work effectively to cause something to happen. To energize, to operate, to work effectually in. It means power in exercise, and is used only of superhuman power. To work energetically, effectively and/or efficiently. To put forth energy. To be at work. To produce results. **Energeo** describes active, efficient, effective working. Paul is saying that the power of God's word exerts effective, energetic power in believers. This activity put forth in an individual energizes him to the doing of certain things intended by the one who is doing the energizing.

**TECHNICAL NOTE - Energeo** "represents a single participle (energoumenē) standing at the end of the sentence. Etymologically this compound term denotes a power working inwardly; our English word "energy" is derived from the cognate noun. The exact force of the participle here has been variously understood. It may be

taken as the practical equivalent of an adjective describing "supplication"; then it describes the prayer as actively accomplishing its task, as being energetic and effective. But more probably the emphatic participle does not describe the prayer but gives the reason why a righteous man's prayer is so strong. Thus others regard the particle as relating directly to the action of the verb. Its force may be either middle or passive. Taken as passive, the meaning is "being made effective," that is, by God or the Holy Spirit. Thus Rotherham renders it, "Much availeth the supplication of a righteous man when it is energized." This is certainly in harmony with the biblical view of prayer, as for example in Romans 8:26. Thus Davids comments, "Prayer is not itself powerful; it is not magic. But its power is unlimited in that the child of God calls on a Father of unlimited goodness and ability." Others accept the voice as middle, meaning "when it is operating, is energizing."....Views are divided as to whether the form is middle or passive. Either view is possible; ultimately both truths are involved."

**Osborne** adds this technical note - Literally, "has great power, working," with energoumene either **temporal** ("when it is at work," so Blomberg and Kamell, Hiebert, Ropes) or **adjectival** ("effective prayer," so Dibelius, Laws), and it can also be either **passive** ("made effective by God/the Spirit," so Davids, Mayor) or **middle** ("as it is at work," so Adamson, Martin, Moo; McCartney 2009:250, "is very powerful and effective"). The **NLT** catches it well (**The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.** JaS 5:16NLT), for the middle force still conveys God's power at work, as it may be best to see it as a circumstantial participle that becomes another main clause: "and produces wonderful results." (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – Volume 18: James)

**Wordsworth** - "On the word energoumene, inwardly energizing in devotion and love to God, so as to produce external effects in obedience"...."Observe, therefore, how happily the two emphatic words dikaiou (righteous) and energoumenee are (in the Greek text) reserved for the end of the sentence, to give weight and force to the whole; and to make it sink into the ears and hearts of hearers and readers of the Epistle; and to teach the faithful of every age, that it is holiness of life and devotion of heart which give efficacy to Prayer" (Wordsworth, Greek Testament)

**Prayer** (1162)(**deesis**) refers to urgent requests or supplications to meet a need and are exclusively addressed to God. **Deesis** is restricted to petitionary prayer, a petition for what is desired." (Hiebert). **Deesis** prayers arise from one's sense of need (which reflects a humble heart) and in knowing what is lacking. This individual's plea is in turn made to God to supply the need. **Deesis** in the New Testament always carries the idea of genuine entreaty and supplication before God. It implies a realization of need and a petition for its supply. Deesis is used twice in Paul's exhortation regarding prayer in the context of spiritual warfare

With all prayer and **petition** pray at all times (kairos also means "opportunities" a good way to look at prayer - as an opportunity to intercede!) in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and **petition** for all the saints, (Eph 6:18+)

**Peter** accentuates the efficacy of the prayers of the **righteous** writing

For the eyes of the Lord are upon the **righteous** (**dikaios**), And His ears attend to their prayer (**deesis**), But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (1 Peter 3:12+)

The Old Testament repeatedly affirms the prayer of the **righteous** and the impotence of the prayers of the **unrighteous**

Hear a just cause, O LORD, give heed to my cry; Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips. (Ps 17:1)

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight. (Pr. 15:8)

The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous. (Pr 15:29)

He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered. (Pr 21:13)

He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination. (Pr 28:9, cf Jn 9:31, James 4:3+)

If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear; (Ps. 66:18),

**Righteous man** (man added by NAS; **NET** has "righteous person") (1342)(**dikaios**) describes a man who is in right relation to God and other men. He is positionally righteous (all justified/saved individuals) and he is experientially righteous (confesses his sins, keeps pure, in short one who continually pursues **progressive sanctification**).

In James 5:6± the oppressive rich condemned and put to death the **righteous man**. The first **righteous man** in the Bible was Noah = "Noah was a **righteous man** (Lxx = [dikaios](#)); blameless in his time; Noah walked with God." (Ge 6:9). Ultimately before God's perfect righteousness there is no human who is righteous before Him (Ro 3:10±), but Ro 1:16-17± describes how sinners can attain to this otherwise unobtainable divine righteousness, for Paul declares "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it (THE GOSPEL) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE **RIGHTEOUS man** SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

**THOUGHT** - The phrase "**righteous man**" occurs 30x in the NAS and makes an interesting study - you will see how the Bible defines a "**righteous man**" - Gen. 6:9; 2 Sam. 4:11; Ps. 5:12; Ps. 64:10; Ps. 92:12; Prov. 9:9; Prov. 12:10; Prov. 13:5; Prov. 20:7; Prov. 24:16; Prov. 25:26; Eccl. 3:17; Eccl. 7:15; Eccl. 7:20; Isa. 57:1; Ezek. 3:20; Ezek. 3:21; Ezek. 18:24; Ezek. 18:26; Ezek. 33:12; Matt. 1:19; Matt. 10:41; Matt. 27:19; Lk. 23:50; Rom. 1:17; Rom. 5:7; Gal. 3:11; Jas. 5:6; Jas. 5:16; 2 Pet. 2:8

**Can accomplish** (*polu ischuei* = "is able to do much")([2480](#))**ischuo** from **ischus** = might) means to be strong in body or in resources. **ischuo** can speak of physical power (Mk 2:17, 5:4, 9:12). It can speak of having the required personal resources to accomplish some objective as here in James 5:16 where this righteous man's prayers **accomplish much**. The [present tense](#) speaks of these prayers continually having "power!"

**THOUGHT**- Why do we not avail ourselves of this incredible divine provision and promise more often?

Luke uses **ischuo** in Acts 19:20+ of the Word of God writing "the Word of the Lord was growing mightily and **prevailing** (**ischuo**)."  
Luke's use of ischuo suggests to me that the **prevailing prayer of the righteous person** is so effective because they are continually **partaking of the "prevailing" Word of God!**" Such prayer is an active power producing amazing victories." (Hiebert)

**Sam Storms** - "Prayer is powerful for only one reason. It is the means whereby we avail ourselves of the power of God."

**F B Meyer** on prayer that can accomplish much - "It was so with John Knox, whose prayers were more dreaded by Mary of Scots than the armies of Philip."

**Brian Bell** - To become more effective in our praying, we should heed these words of Bishop Hall: "It is not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they be; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they be; nor the music of our prayers, how sweet our voice may be; nor the method of our prayers, how orderly they may be; nor even the theology of our prayers, how good the doctrine may be - which God cares for. Fervency of spirit is that which availeth much." (**ED: AND I WOULD ADD CONTINUAL RELIANCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR "HOLY FERVENCY!"**)([Sermon](#))

**John MacArthur** - Weak prayers come from weak people; strong prayers come from strong people. The energetic prayers of a righteous man are a potent force in calling down the power of God for restoring weak, struggling believers to spiritual health. (New Testament Commentary – James)

**Hiebert** - Both the Old and the New Testament provide varied examples of the power of prayer: Joshua's prayer and the sun standing still (Josh. 10:12-13); Elisha's prayer and the restoration to life of the Shulamite woman's son (2 Kings 4:32-35); Hezekiah's prayer and the slaying of 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (Isa. 37:21, 36); the answer received by the importunate neighbor (Luke 11:5-8); the response to the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8); and the answer received by the persevering Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30). ([James Commentary](#))

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**Warren Wiersbe** - There are some **practical lessons from this section that we must not overlook** For one thing, disobedience to God can lead to sickness. This was David's experience when he tried to hide his sins (Ps. 32). Second, sin affects the whole church. We can never sin alone, for sin has a way of growing and infecting others. This man had to confess his sins to the church because he had sinned against the church. Third, there is healing (physical and spiritual) when sin is dealt with. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy" (Prov. 28:13). James wrote, "**Make it a habit to confess your sins to each other**" (literal translation). Do not hide sin or delay confession. The "confessing" that James wrote about is done among the saints. He was not suggesting confessing our sins to a preacher or priest. We confess our sins first of all to the Lord (1 John 1:9), but we must also confess them to those who have been affected by them. **We must never confess sin beyond the circle of that sin's influence. Private sin requires private confession; public sin requires public confession.** (ED; SEE QUOTE BELOW FROM PURKISER) It is wrong for Christians to "hang dirty wash in public," for such "confessing" might do more harm than the original sin. (Bible Exposition Commentary)

A sound principle is that  
the area of commission  
should be the area of confession.

## Guidelines for Confession of Sins to One Another -- Kent Hughes

**(1) First, confession should generally be made to an individual.** There are exceptions, of course—as, for example when a sin has been against the whole group. But normally confession to all the church is not required to restore one to fellowship with the whole congregation. "I meet the whole congregation in the one brother to whom I confess my sins."

**(2) Second, if the sin has been against a fellow Christian, it is to that person that we must make confession** Jesus said, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23, 24). The rule of thumb is, the confession should not exceed the range of commission.

**(3) Third, if the sin is not against a person, and if it is such that we need to confess it and gain spiritual counsel and support, we must go to a mature Christian.** This cannot be stressed enough! An immature Christian should not be expected to carry such burdens. Moreover, confession to the immature may provide a temptation to gossip. Along this line, those whom we would confide in must be people of prayer.

**(4) Fourth, the confession must be concrete, not amorphous.** This is not to suggest, however, that all the lurid details be shared. One sins in confession if his recounting becomes voyeurism!

**(5) Fifth, confessing sins to one another is not a law, but a divinely given help and is to be practiced only as God directs**

There is power in a confessing fellowship, but the power is not in the confessing, as necessary as it is, but in the resulting prayer, as is emphasized by the last half of James 5:16: "and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

When the righteous pray for each other, there is power! All Christians are righteous positionally, as they have received "a righteousness from God" (Romans 1:17; cf. 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9b). But more than that is meant here, for the emphasis is on practical righteousness. Those with righteous lives are powerful in prayer. This principle was expressed in Isaiah's ancient words, "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1, 2). Similarly the Psalmist said, "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" (Psalm 66:18). And, "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry" (Psalm 34:15). Proverbs states positively, "The Lord... hears the prayer of the righteous" (Proverbs 15:29).

If you are "confessed up" and walking with Christ, your prayers are spiritual dynamite, especially as they are offered for your needy brothers and sisters in Christ! A confessing and a praying church is packed with spiritual power. Think what could happen if Christians not only confessed their sins to God but, as the Holy Spirit directed, confessed certain sins to each other and then as righteous people prayed for each other! Such confession was at the heart of the small group meetings which fueled the Methodist movement. Indeed confession has been at the heart of the periodic revivals which have graced the American church since New England's Great Awakening. "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16). Is God convicting us to make confession and seek the prayers of the righteous? Then may we do it! Our humble resolve may well mean great blessing for the church. ([Preaching the Word – James: Faith That Works](#))

Below are links to Kent Hughes Mp3 sermons that reiterate the principles recorded above

- [James 5:13-16 The Prayer of Faith 1](#)
- [James 5:16-18 The Prayer of Faith 2](#)

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David Guzik's guidelines on confession of sin -

Public confession of sin has the potential for great good or bad. Some guiding principles can help.

Confession should be made to the one sinned against. "Most Christians display a preference for confession in secret before God, even concerning matters which involve other people. To confess to God seems to them to be the easiest way out. If offenders were really conscious of the presence of God, even secret confession of private sin would have a good effect. Alas, most offenders merely commune with themselves instead of making contact with God, who refuses their prayers under certain conditions. In the words of our Lord, it is clear that sin involving another person should be confessed to that person." (Orr)

Confession should often be public. James 5:16 illustrates this principle. A.T. Robertson, the great Greek scholar, says that in James 5:16 the odd tense of the Greek verb confess in this verse implies group confession rather than private confession. It is confession "ones to others" not "one to one other."

Public confession must be discrete. Often the confession needs to be no more than what is necessary to enlist prayer. It can be enough to say publicly, "Pray for me, I need victory over my besetting sin." It would be wrong to go into more detail, but saying this much is important. It keeps us from being "let's pretend Christians" who act as if everything is fine when it isn't. "Almost all sexual transgressions are either secret or private and should be so confessed. A burden too great to bear may be shared with a pastor or doctor or a friend of the same sex. Scripture discourages even the naming of immorality among believers, and declares that it is a shame even to speak of things done in secret by the immoral." (Orr)

Distinguish between secret sins and those which directly affect others. Orr gives a good principle: "If you sin secretly, confess secretly, admitting publicly that you need the victory but keeping details to yourself. If you sin openly confess openly to remove stumbling blocks from those whom you have hindered. If you have sinned spiritually (prayerlessness, lovelessness, and unbelief as well as their offspring, criticism, etc.) then confess to the church that you have been a hindrance." (J. Edwin Orr)

Confession is often made to people, but before God. At the same time, we notice that James says confess your trespasses to one another. One of the interesting things about confession of sin as I have noticed it in the writings of J. Edwin Orr is that the confessions are almost always addressed to people, not to God. It isn't that you confess your sin to God and others merely hear. You confess your sin before others and ask them to pray for you to get it right before God.

Confession should be appropriately specific. When open confession of sin is appropriate – more than the public stating of spiritual need, but confessing open sin or sin against the church – it must be specific. "If I made any mistakes I'm sorry" is no confession of sin at all. You sinned specifically, so confess specifically. "It costs nothing for a church member to admit in a prayer meeting: 'I am not what I ought to be.' It costs no more to say: 'I ought to be a better Christian.' It costs something to say: 'I have been a trouble-maker in this church.' It costs something to say: 'I have had bitterness of heart towards certain leaders, to whom I shall definitely apologise.'" (Orr, [Full Surrender](#))

Confession should be thorough. "Some confessions are not thorough. They are too general. They are not made to the persons concerned. They neglect completely the necessary restitution. Or they make no provision for a different course of conduct in which the sin is forsaken. They are endeavours for psychological relief." (Orr)

Confession must have honesty and integrity. If we confess with no real intention of battling the sin, our confession isn't thorough and it mocks God. The story is told of an Irishman who confessed to his priest that he had stolen two bags of potatoes. The priest had heard the gossip around town and said to the man, "Mike, I heard it was only one bag of potatoes stolen from the market." The Irishman replied, "That's true Father, but it was so easy that I plan on taking another tomorrow night." By all means, avoid phony confession – confession without true brokenness or sorrow. If it isn't deeply real, it isn't any good.

One need not fear that public confession of sin will inevitably get out of hand. Orr tells of a time when a woman was overwrought by deep sorrow for sin and became hysterical. He saw the danger immediately and told her, "Quiet, sister. Turn your eyes on Jesus." She did and the danger of extreme emotion was avoided.

Those who hear a confession of sin also have a great responsibility. Those who hear the confession should have the proper response: loving, intercessory prayer, and not human wisdom, gossiping, or "sharing" the need with others. ([James 5 Commentary](#))

Guzik quoted from [J Edwin Orr's book "Full Surrender" which is available for download here](#) Download the Pdf and go to chapter 3 which deals with "Confession."

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**Steven Cole - IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH SIN, FIND A GODLY SAINT TO SHARE WITH IN MUTUAL CONFESSION AND PRAYER (5:16A).**

"Therefore" shows that this is a conclusion. The idea is (Moo, p. 245), "Since the prayer for healing offered in faith accomplishes so much (v. 15a) and since God is anxious to forgive the sins of his people (v. 15b), the whole community should be encouraged to confess their sins to one another and to pray for one another. By so doing, the health (in the broadest sense) of the community will

be insured."

Confession, like prayer for healing, has also been taken to unwarranted extremes. Some never do it at all, but others may indiscreetly share things in public that should never be shared. I once had a man in a Sunday School class share in front of the entire class (with his wife present) that he had lusted over another woman in the class! James is not encouraging such a thing!

Generally, the confession should be as public as the sin. If it is a private sin, confess it privately, or find a godly, trustworthy saint who will keep your confidence and confess it to him or her (men with men, women with women). If your sin hurt specific individuals, confess it to those people and ask their forgiveness. If it affected the entire church, then ask the elders for an appropriate time and place to confess it to the church.

The Roman Catholic Church uses this verse to justify the practice of confessing your sins to a priest. But they seem to ignore that the practice is to be mutual ("to one another"). I doubt that the priest would appreciate it if the one doing the confessing said, "Okay, it's your turn"! James wasn't thinking of confession to a priest, except in the sense that every believer is a priest. Rather, he is acknowledging that we are all struggling against sin, and we need one another in the battle. We need to help one another as we fight to establish and maintain a God-ward, God-dependent focus. ([James 5:13-16 The God-dependent Community](#))

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### **James 5:16**

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

It might be rendered literally: "Very strong is the supplication of a righteous man, energising." When a man is right with God, not regarding iniquity in his heart, nor seeking aught for his own pleasure, the energy of the Divine Spirit moves mightily within him, and his prayers become very strong. They recall the Master's, with their strong cryings and tears.

The righteous man finds relief for suffering in prayer. — "Is any among you suffering? let him pray." There are sorrows we cannot tell to our dearest. Surges of grief sweep over us for which we have no words. Life is a stern fight for us all; and each heart knows its own bitterness. But there is always one resort: we can pour out our sorrows into the ear of our compassionate and merciful High Priest.

The righteous man prays the prayer of faith. — The prayer of faith is that which is so sure of the Divine answer that it knows that it has received it, though there is no appearance of its having been granted to the sense. We can only pray that prayer when we have asked what is in God's will to bestow. But righteous men cannot always pray thus, because they do not know the Lord's will on matters not recorded in this book. There are some sicknesses which are „into death, and we cannot pray the prayer of faith for these. If you cannot pray the prayer of faith, take medicine, and use the best means in your reach.

The righteous man can affect the whole history of his fatherland by his prayers. — It was so with Elijah, as we learn here. It was so with John Knox, whose prayers were more dreaded by Mary of Scots than the armies of Philip. (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)

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**Ray Pritchard** - We need to **pray for one another**. As we pray together, we find strength in shared sorrows and joys. As we pray for each other, God sends his angels to help those for whom we pray. Our words uttered in secret move the heart of God, and friends in the battle are made strong once again.

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Confess your trespasses to one another; and pray for- one another; that you may be healed. James 5:16

While waiting for the teller at a bank counter in Liverpool, England, evangelist Charles Alexander picked up a pen and began to write on a pad of paper. Two words had gripped his heart: "Pray Through." So he wrote them over and over until the paper was filled from top to bottom. When the teller returned to the window, the preacher transacted his business and left. The next day, a friend visited Alexander to tell him a striking story. A businessman had come into the bank shortly after Alexander had left. He was discouraged and weighed down with financial troubles. As he began to do his banking at the same counter, he noticed the pad with its long columns of "Pray Through." When he learned from the teller that Charles Alexander had printed those words, he exclaimed, "That is the very message I need! I have tried to **worry through** in my own strength, and have only mentioned my troubles to God. Now, I am going to **pray through** until I get light."

Our heavenly Father waits to hear fervent, earnest, persistent prayer from us rather than feeble, apathetic requests. When troubles surround us, let's determine to "**pray through**." —P. R. VanGorder ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI.](#)

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**IF YOU ARE A STRANGER TO PRAYER,  
YOU ARE A STRANGER TO POWER.**

(see [E.M. Bounds - Power Through Prayer](#))

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## James 5:16

Too often our petitions fit the description of prayer given by Thomas Brooks, who said, "Cold prayers are as arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wings; they pierce not, they cut not, they fly not up to heaven. Cold prayers always freeze before they reach heaven." To become more effective in our praying, we should heed these words of Bishop Hall: "It is not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they be; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they be; nor the music of our prayers, how sweet our voice may be; nor the method of our prayers, how orderly they may be; nor even the theology of our prayers, how good the doctrine may be—which God cares for. Fervency of spirit is that which availeth much." James reminds us that Elijah "prayed earnestly." And what answers he received—the very forces of nature were changed! By contrast, indefinite praying by indifferent people brings little results. Fervent prayer, if it be for God's glory and presented in the name of His Son, will accomplish great things for time and eternity. - Paul R VanGorder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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Norman Geisler in Correcting the Cults James 5:16

### **MISINTERPRETATION:**

Leaders in the Boston Church of Christ have used this verse to justify their practice of having members write down their sins in detail, which can later be used to intimidate them into submission. Is this what the passage in James means?

### **CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION:**

There is nothing here or anywhere in Scripture that justifies such an extreme practice. For one thing, we are told to confess our sins to one another and to pray for one another (James 5:16). This would include leaders as well as followers. Further, we are not told to cross-examine one another. Cross-examination of others about their sins is contrary to the spirit of Christ. We are told to bear one another's burdens, not to lay burdens on them (Gal. 6:5). When others do sin, we are to restore them in the spirit of meekness (Gal. 6:1), not inquire about their sins in an authoritarian manner.

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### **Stephen Olford in the Way of Holiness writes...**

We Must Tell God About Our Sins

We must confess our sins, and this involves:

1. Private Confession. This has to do with God and you. Anything that breaks fellowship must be specifically confessed. Proverbs 28:13 says, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."

2. Personal Confession. This involves another brother or sister in Christ. Jesus said, "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24). And James adds, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

3. Public Confession. When the sin committed involves the whole church, confession must be made to the whole church before restoration can take place (see Matt. 18:15-17).

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No "I" in the Lord's Prayer

You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer and even once say "I."

You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer and even once say "My."

Nor can you pray the Lord's Prayer and not **pray for one another.**

And when you ask for daily bread, you must include your brother.

For others are included... in each and every plea,

From the beginning to the end of it, it doesn't once say "Me."

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## Patient Health

Research at San Francisco General Hospital has revealed that victims of heart attack, heart failure and other cardiac problems who were remembered in prayers fared better than those who were not. Cardiologist Randy Byrd assigned 192 patients to the "prayed-for" group and 201 patients to the "not-prayed-for" group. All patients were in the coronary intensive care unit. Patients, doctors and nurses did not know which group patients were in. Prayer group members were scattered around the nation and given only the first names, diagnoses and prognoses of patients. The researcher said that the results were dramatic.

The prayed-for group had significantly fewer complications than the unremembered group. And fewer members of the former died.

The latter group was five times more likely to develop infections requiring antibiotics, and three times more likely to develop a lung condition, leading to heart failure. These findings were published in the American Heart Association. Adopted From Chicago Sun-Times

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### **James 5:14-20 Men of the Cloth**

Four men of the cloth, taking a short breather from their heavy schedules, were on a park bench, chatting and enjoying an early spring day.

"You know, since all of us are such good friends," said one, "this might be a good time to discuss the problems that are disturbing us." They all nodded in agreement.

"Well, I would like to share with you the fact that I drink to excess," said one.

There was a gasp from the other three. Then another spoke up. "Since you were so honest, I'd like to say that my big problem is gambling. It's terrible, I know, but I can't quit. I've even been tempted to take money from the collection plate."

Another gasp was heard, and the third clergyman spoke. "I'm really troubled, brothers, because I'm growing fond of a woman in my church—a married woman."

More gasps. But the fourth man remained silent. After a few minutes the others coaxed him to open up. "The fact is," he said, "I just don't know how to tell you about my problem."

"It's all right, brother. Your secret is safe with us."

"Well, it's this way," he said. "You see, I'm an incurable gossip."

Arlene Quant, quoted by Alex Thien in Milwaukee Sentinel

### Confession

I would let no man take confession away from me, and I would not give it up for all the treasures of the world, since I know what comfort and strength it has given me.

Martin Luther, Eighth sermon of the series preached at Wittenberg after returning from Wartburg, 1522; in John T. McNeill, *A History Of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), p. 168

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That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us.

1JOHN 1:3, Heb 10:25, Heb 3:13

We are hearing a lot these days about networking. This term refers to the people in our lives—relatives, friends, and associates—who are part of our emotional and physical support base. They are the people we can count on for help. When we're out of a job looking for an emergency loan, or grieving, they are the ones who stand by us.

The idea of networking is closely akin to the Christian concept of fellowship. It transcends racial, social, economic, and sexual differences and unites a wide variety of people in the worship and service of Christ.

The true nature of Christian fellowship may be clarified by contrasting the use of two German words. The first, gesellschaft, refers to people thrown together without deep ties, such as all the people riding the same bus. The second, gemeinschaft, refers to those with intimate ties of family or community.

We need the fellowship of a community of believers who love, encourage, and **pray for one another.** —D. C. E.

**WE NEED ENCOURAGEMENT TO BUILD US UP AND SUPPORT TO HOLD US UP.**

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### **There's Power**

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. —James 5:16

Today's Scripture: James 5:13-18

When my sister found out she had cancer, I asked my friends to pray. When she had surgery, we prayed that the surgeon would be

able to remove all of the cancer and that she wouldn't have to undergo chemotherapy or radiation. And God answered yes! When I reported the news, one friend remarked, "I'm so glad there's power in prayer." I responded, "I'm thankful that God answered with a yes this time."

James says that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (5:16). But does "effective" and "fervent" mean the harder we pray, or the more people we ask to pray, the more likely God is to answer with a yes? I've had enough "no" and "wait" answers to wonder about that.

Prayer is powerful, but it's such a mystery. We're taught to have faith, to ask earnestly and boldly, to persevere, to be surrendered to His will. Yet God answers in His wisdom and His answers are best. I'm just thankful that God wants to hear our hearts and that no matter the answer, He is still good.

I like Ole Hallesby's words: "Prayer and helplessness are inseparable. Only those who are helpless can truly pray. . . . Your helplessness is your best prayer." We can do helplessness quite well. By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

#### Reflect & Pray

Lord, I've been taught many things about prayer—be specific, be bold, be surrendered, be strong in faith, be persistent. Today I recognize my helplessness and Your power as I share my heart with You. Amen.

Prayer is the child's helpless cry to the Father's attentive ear.

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#### Serving God with Our Prayers

The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. James 5:16 nlt

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Kings 18:41–45

God often chooses to move through our prayers to accomplish His work. We see this when God told the prophet Elijah, "I will send rain on the land," promising to end a drought in Israel that had lasted three and a half years (James 5:17). Even though God had promised rain, a short time later "Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees"—praying intently for the rain to come (1 Kings 18:42). Then, while he continued to pray, Elijah sent his servant to go and look out over the ocean "seven times," scanning the horizon for any sign of rain (v. 43).

Elijah understood that God wants us to join in His work through humble, persistent prayer. Regardless of our human limitations, God may choose to move through our praying in amazing ways. That's why the letter of James tells us that "the earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results," all the while reminding us that "Elijah was as human as we are" (James 5:16–17 nlt).

When we make it our aim to serve God through praying faithfully as Elijah did, we're taking part in a beautiful privilege—where at any moment we may be given a front-row seat to a miracle! By: James Banks ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

#### Reflect & Pray

How can I serve You through my prayers today, Father?

Submit your prayer request or pray for others at [yourdailybread.org](http://yourdailybread.org)

Great expectation on our part honors God.

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#### Cold Prayers

Too often our petitions fit the description of prayer given by Thomas Brooks, who said, "Cold prayers are as arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wings; they pierce not, they cut not, they fly not up to heaven. Cold prayers always freeze before they reach heaven." To become more effective in our praying, we should heed these words of Bishop Hall: "It is not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they be; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they be; nor the music of our prayers, how sweet our voice may be; nor the method of our prayers, how orderly they may be; nor even the theology of our prayers, how good the doctrine may be—which God cares for. Fervency of spirit is that

which availeth much."

James reminds us that Elijah "prayed earnestly." And what answers he received—the very forces of nature were changed! By contrast, indefinite praying by indifferent people brings little results. Fervent prayer, if it be for God's glory and presented in the name of His Son, will accomplish great things for time and eternity. - P R.V ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **The Squeaky Wheel**

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. —James 5:16 niv

Today's Scripture & Insight: Luke 18:1-8

"The squeaky wheel gets the oil" is a popular proverb. As a child I rode my bicycle for long distances between home and school, and the squeaky sounds of the wheels drew my attention to the need to lubricate them.

In Luke 18, the widow's persistent request to the judge for justice against her adversary made her sound like a "squeaky wheel" until she got the result she needed. Luke explains that Jesus told this story to teach us the need to pray continually and not to give up, even if it appears that the answer to our prayer is delayed (vv.1-5).

God is certainly not an unjust judge who must be harassed before He responds to us. He is our loving Father who cares about us and hears us when we cry to Him. Regular, persistent prayer draws us closer to Him. It may feel like we are a squeaky wheel, but the Lord welcomes our prayer and encourages us to approach Him with our cries. He hears us and will come to our aid in ways that we may not expect.

As Jesus teaches in Matthew 6:5-8, constant prayer does not require long periods of "vain repetitions." Rather, as we bring our needs before God "day and night" (Luke 18:7) and walk with the One who already knows our needs, we learn to trust God and wait patiently for His response. By: Lawrence Darmani ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Reflect & Pray

For Further Study

To read more about prayer, check out the online booklet [Why Doesn't God Answer Me](#) at Discovery Series

Don't give up—God hears you when you pray!

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### **The Pretender**

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. —James 5:16

Today's Scripture: Genesis 27:19-33

When a waitress in Ohio asked to see a customer's driver's license, she was shocked when she saw the photo on the ID. It was her own picture! The waitress had lost her driver's license a month earlier, and this young woman was using it so she'd have "proof" she was old enough to drink alcohol. The police were called, and the customer was arrested for identity theft. Trying to gain what she wanted, she pretended to be someone she wasn't.

Jacob, in the Old Testament, did some pretending too. With his mother Rebekah's help, he fooled his dying father into believing he was his brother Esau so he could gain the blessing meant for the elder son (Gen. 27). Jacob got caught after his deceitful act, but it was too late for Esau to receive the blessing.

Pretending goes on in our churches today. Some people put on a false front. They use the right "Christian" words, attend church almost every Sunday, and even pray before meals. They pretend they "have it all together" in order to gain the approval of others. But inside they're struggling with brokenness, guilt, doubt, or an addiction or other persistent sin.

God placed us in a body of believers to support one another. Admit that you aren't perfect. Then seek the counsel of a godly brother or sister in Christ. By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Reflect & Pray

Don't hide your sin and cover up,

Pretending there is nothing wrong;  
Instead, confess it and repent,  
Then God will fill your heart with song.  
—Sper

Be what God intends you to be—don't pretend to be what you're not.

---

### **Prayer's Effects**

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. —James 5:16

Today's Scripture: James 5:13-20

For many years, researchers have tried to determine if prayer has any effect on physical healing. An assistant professor at George Washington University School of Medicine says that "trying to scientifically determine prayer's effect on health is nearly impossible."

Even Christians who agree that God heals may differ widely on how, when, and why He does. We struggle to understand why the Lord restores some to health while others suffer and die.

James addressed the matter in a way that is worthy of careful study and attention. He discussed healing in the context of a fellowship of believers and said: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

James' purpose was not to stir up controversy or to prove a scientific point. Instead, he focused on the privilege and power of prayer. While speaking of physical healing, he also included a call for restoration to spiritual health through repentance and confession (v.15).

Science tries to prove cause and effect. Faith directs us to call on the power of our loving God, whose ways we can rarely understand but can always trust. By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### Reflect & Pray

My prayer is a simple one, Lord:  
Whatever is best for me, do;  
In sickness, in health I desire  
What brings the most glory to You.  
—Fasick

Prayer is the soil in which hope and healing grow best.

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### **Giving Yourself Away**

Read: Romans 7:15-25

Confess your [sins] to one another, and pray for one another. —James 5:16

Studies show that people who don't reveal their deep thoughts and feelings tend to be less well-adjusted than those who do. But it is also true that those who freely talk about all their weaknesses are usually not very well-adjusted either. Men and women with healthy personalities do expose their personal lives, but they are selective in what they say.

This truth reminds me of the writings of the apostle Paul. Romans 7 is a good example of the extent to which we should disclose our inner conflicts and emotions. Having brought all his sins, fears, and disappointments to God, Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to record and compile some of his feelings for the benefit of others. And down through the ages, believers have been able to identify with the struggles, defeats, and victories of this great man who knew what it meant to be weak in himself but strong in the Lord. Notice, however, that Paul did not record his evil thoughts and deeds in detail. He always shared his inner life with discretion.

When it comes to giving ourselves away—telling about our own failings in order to help others—we need both courage and discernment. Courage enables us to be honest, and discernment keeps us from flaunting our sin. By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

It often helps in time of trial,  
When fearful and alone,

To know that every doubt we feel  
The greatest saints have known.  
—DJD

We can help others when we confess our faults—but not to a fault!

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### **The Quarter In Your Pocket**

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. —James 5:16

Today's Scripture: James 5:13-18

Some things are irresistible. For me, it's bubble-gum machines. I can hardly resist the urge to watch one of those colorful gumballs roll down the tunnel so I can pop it into my mouth. But without a quarter, those gumballs are locked up inside. You can be sure that as long as I have the right coin, I won't pass up an opportunity to enjoy the mouth-watering treat.

Prayer is the quarter in your pocket when it comes to releasing the vast resources of God's character and blessings in your life. The "muchness" of God stands in sharp contrast to the leanness of our souls, and without prayer we cannot begin to tap into the reservoir of all that He is waiting to bestow on us. When we long for a satisfying taste of His resources, prayer is essential.

James makes it clear that our prayer needs to be "fervent" and "effective" (5:16). God is not into ritual but reality. He wants us to avoid formulaic prayers in exchange for a persistent passion. We are to approach His throne of grace with a keen awareness of our need for Him.

As James stated earlier in his book, "You do not have because you do not ask" (4:2). The more we pray, the more we receive, and before long our lives will demonstrate the life-changing reality of the muchness of God. By: Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### Reflect & Pray

The more we go to God in prayer  
Intent to seek His face,  
The more we'll want to be with Him  
Before His throne of grace.

—Sper

Much prayer, much power; little prayer, little power; no prayer, no power!

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### **Our Prayer & God's Power**

Pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. —James 5:16

Today's Scripture: James 5:13-20

When we pray for others, we become partners with God in His work of salvation, healing, comfort, and justice. God can accomplish those things without us, but in His plan He gives us the privilege of being involved with Him through prayer.

When we intercede for a grandson in trouble, a mother having surgery, a neighbor who needs Christ, or a pastor who needs strength, we are asking God to provide for that person what we can't provide. We are acting as go-betweens, asking God to direct His power in a specific direction.

In his classic book titled Prayer, Olan Hallesby described how it works: "This power is so rich and so mobile that all we have to do when we pray is point to the person or thing to which we desire to have [God's] power applied, and He, the Lord of this power, will direct the necessary power to the desired place."

This assumes, of course, that we are praying "according to [God's] will" (1 John 5:14). Prayer is not a magic wand for satisfying our own wishes, but it's an opportunity to work with the Lord in accomplishing His purposes.

James told us that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). So let's humbly and earnestly pray for one another. By: David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### Reflect & Pray

As we attempt to live like Christ  
In actions, words, and deeds,  
We'll follow His design for prayer  
And pray for others' needs.

—JDB

The most powerful position on earth is kneeling before the Lord of the universe.

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### **Pay To Pray?**

Read: 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

Did I commit sin . . . because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge. —2 Corinthians 11:7

Several years ago a news report told about a preacher who promised to sell blessings on the installment plan. Incredible as it sounds, he offered 12 monthly blessings for \$84. Anyone who wanted his prayers could fill out a coupon and send \$7 a month for one year. Hinting that his prayers have brought people financial rewards, he promised to send a "blessing certificate" when he received the first payment, and an "anointed billfold" with the second. Of course, there was no money-back guarantee.

Can you imagine Jesus or Peter or Paul promising to pray for people in return for a contribution to their ministries? Certainly not! Paul made every effort to live above reproach. In 2 Corinthians 11:7, Paul told believers that he had "preached the gospel of God to [them] free of charge." Although he was specifically referring to the proclamation of the Word, the principle of serving with pure motives applies to any spiritual endeavor.

Beware of anyone who places an emphasis on money while promising to give you spiritual benefit in return. James 5:16 says, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." I don't think a righteous man would ever insist on receiving pay to pray!

By Richard DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We desecrate prayer when we give it a price,  
We cheapen each word that we say;  
For prayer without ceasing fulfills God's command—  
His grace gives us freedom to pray.

—DJD

The one who serves God for money is spiritually bankrupt.

---

### **The Power Of Prayer**

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. —James 5:16

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-18

While crossing the Atlantic on a ship many years ago, Bible teacher and author F. B. Meyer was asked to speak to the passengers. An agnostic listened to Meyer's message about answered prayer and told a friend, "I didn't believe a word of it."

Later that same day, the agnostic went to hear Meyer speak to another group of passengers. But before he went to the meeting, he put two oranges in his pocket. On his way, he passed an elderly woman who was fast asleep in her deck chair. Her arms were outstretched and her hands were wide open, so as a joke he put the two oranges in her palms. After the meeting, he saw the woman happily eating one of the pieces of fruit.

"You seem to be enjoying that orange," he remarked with a smile. "Yes, sir," she replied, "My Father is very good to me." "What do you mean?" pressed the agnostic. She explained, "I have been seasick for days. I was asking God somehow to send me an orange. I fell asleep while I was praying. When I awoke, I found He had sent me not only one but two oranges!" The agnostic was amazed by the unexpected confirmation of Meyer's talk on answered prayer. Later, he put his trust in Christ.

Yes, God answers prayer! By: Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### **Reflect & Pray**

For answered prayer we thank You, Lord,  
We know You're always there

To hear us when we call on You;  
We're grateful for Your care.

—JDB

God always gives us what we ask—or something better.

---

### Pinpointing Prayer

Read: James 5:13-18

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. —James 5:16

If we want specific answers to our prayers, we must make definite, individual, personalized requests.

Too many of our prayers are filled with sweeping generalizations that seek God's blessings. Effective, fervent prayer, however, focuses on specific requests. If we pinpoint our prayers, we will have reason to praise God for particular answers!

Some years ago a young girl was very sick and not expected to recover. Because of her love for Jesus, she was troubled that she had not been able to do more for Him in her short life. Her pastor suggested that she make a list of people in their little town who needed Christ and pray that they might put their faith in Him. She took his advice, made a list, and prayed often for each person.

Some time later God began to stir a revival in the village. The girl heard of the people who were coming to Christ and prayed even more. As she heard reports, she checked off the names of those who had been led to the Lord.

After the girl died, a prayer list with the names of 56 people was found under her pillow. All had put their faith in Christ—the last one on the night before her death.

Such is the power of definite, specific, fervent prayer. Do you have a prayer list? By Henry G. Bosch [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Lord, lay some soul upon my heart  
And love that soul through me,  
And may I nobly do my part  
To win that soul for Thee!

—Tucker

Make it a point to pinpoint your prayers.

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### It's The Knees

Continue earnestly in prayer. —Colossians 4:2

Today's Scripture: James 5:13-18

Both of my knees were hurting, and I could not figure out why. I hadn't done anything to damage them or put undo pressure on them.

Or had I? I recalled that over the previous few days I had been working on the walls in our house, scrubbing them and getting them ready for painting. And then I had painted them. All the while, as I stood on the short ladder to reach the top, I had been pressing my knees against the ladder for balance. I was, in effect, being supported by my knees.

Then a new thought came to mind: When was the last time my knees hurt because I was on them praying? It had been a while.

Although it's true that people pray all the time without kneeling, the question I asked myself is a convicting one. Whether we are on our knees, standing up, or seated, how often do we use prayer to support ourselves? We can find help from many sources—friends, counselors, books—but there's nothing better than the support and strength we get from God when we pray.

"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). Prayer has power. We are to "continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant" (Colossians 4:2) .By: Dave Branen [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

How are your knees?

Reflect & Pray

When I kneel before my Master,  
I can feel His presence there,  
And the load of care and sorrow  
Seems much easier to bear.

—Anon

Prayer does not require eloquence but earnestness.

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### James 5:16 The Effective Prayer

D. L. Moody once wrote, "Though we may not live to see the answer to our prayers, if we cry mightily to God, the answer will come."

Rev. E. M. Bounds said: "Prayers are deathless. The lips that uttered them may be closed in death, the heart that felt them may have ceased to beat, but the prayers live before God, and God's heart is set on them and prayers outlive the lives of those who uttered them; outlive a generation, outlive an age, outlive a world ... Fortunate are they whose fathers and mothers have left them a wealthy patrimony of prayer."

Someone has summarized how God answers different prayers: If the request is wrong, God says no. If the timing is wrong, God says slow. If you are wrong, God says grow. When the request, the timing, and you are right, God says go!

Someone Once Said ... God sovereignly delights to answer the passionate prayers of his children. This is not to suggest that he delights in manufactured passion, nor that passion is a meritorious work. Nor are we suggesting that sweaty, frantic prayer is necessarily pleasing to God. But real passion, however it is expressed through the medium of one's personality, is a part of prayer that God is pleased to answer. (Kent Hughes)

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### Spurgeon's devotional on James 5:16 from Morning and Evening "Pray one for another."

As an encouragement cheerfully to offer intercessory prayer, remember that such prayer is the sweetest God ever hears, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which our Great High Priest now puts into the golden censer, there is not a single grain for himself. His intercession must be the most acceptable of all supplications-and the more like our prayer is to Christ's, the sweeter it will be; thus while petitions for ourselves will be accepted, our pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, more faith, more brotherly kindness, will be, through the precious merits of Jesus, the sweetest oblation that we can offer to God, the very fat of our sacrifice. Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent. What wonders it has wrought! The Word of God teems with its marvellous deeds. Believer, thou hast a mighty engine in thy hand, use it well, use it constantly, use it with faith, and thou shalt surely be a benefactor to thy brethren. When thou hast the King's ear, speak to him for the suffering members of his body. When thou art favoured to draw very near to his throne, and the King saith to thee, "Ask, and I will give thee what thou wilt," let thy petitions be, not for thyself alone, but for the many who need his aid. If thou hast grace at all, and art not an intercessor, that grace must be small as a grain of mustard seed. Thou hast just enough grace to float thy soul clear from the quicksand, but thou hast no deep floods of grace, or else thou wouldest carry in thy joyous bark a weighty cargo of the wants of others, and thou wouldest bring back from thy Lord, for them, rich blessings which but for thee they might not have obtained:-

"Oh, let my hands forget their skill,  
My tongue be silent, cold, and still,  
This bounding heart forget to beat,  
If I forget the mercy-seat!"

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### James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

NET James 5:17 Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and there was no rain on the land for three years and six months!

GNP James 5:17 λας νθρωπος ν μοιοπαθς μν, κα προσευχ προση ξατο το μ βρξαι, κα οκ βρεξεν π τς γς νιαυτο στρες κα μ νας ξ

NLT James 5:17 Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years!

KJV James 5:17 Elias 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.

ESV James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.

ASV James 5:17 Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months.

CSB James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours; yet he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the land.

NIV James 5:17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

NKJ James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

NRS James 5:17 Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.

YLT James 5:17 Elijah was a man like affected as we, and with prayer he did pray -- not to rain, and it did not rain upon the land three years and six months;

NAB James 5:17 Elijah was a human being like us; yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain upon the land.

NJB James 5:17 Elijah was a human being as frail as ourselves -- he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, and no rain fell for three and a half years;

GWN James 5:17 Elijah was human like us. Yet, when he prayed that it wouldn't rain, no rain fell on the ground for three-and-a-half years.

BBE James 5:17 Elijah was a man of flesh and blood as we are, and he made a strong prayer that there might be no rain; and there was no rain on the earth for three years and six months.

- **Elijah** : 1Ki 17:1
- **was a man with a nature like ours**: Ac 10:26 14:15
- **he prayed earnestly** : Ro 11:2 Rev 11:6
- **it did not rain**: Lu 4:25
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ILLUSTRATION OF THE POWER OF PRAYER

**Elijah** is James' fourth reference to an Old Testament character (Abraham, James 2:21-24; Rahab, James 2:25; Job, James 5:11)

**Hiebert** - "Elijah" (Elias), whose name occurs thirty times in the New Testament, held a prominent place in later Judaism. His prominence is in accord with his dynamic personality, but Jewish interest in him was especially stimulated by the prophetic announcement in Malachi 4:5 connecting his reappearance with the coming of the Messiah. He has been called "the grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever produced." Numerous traditions grew up around him and exaggerated opinions developed, ascribing superhuman traits to him. ([James Commentary](#))

**Elijah was a man with a nature like ours** - James takes the "mystery" out of this man Elijah and "stresses his humanity James thus disarms the natural reaction of his readers that common mortals like themselves could never expect to achieve the prayer results of a grand person like Elijah." (Hiebert) Elijah in spite of seeing God work in miraculous ways, became fearful and depressed. So Elijah was not "Superman" but a **man like** all of us (men and women)! He was a sinner infected with "Adam's sin virus" just like all of us (Ro 5:12). And so at times he acted upon his feelings and emotions just like we do and yet God answered His prayers.

**THOUGHT**- The point is that the power of Elijah's prayers was in his powerful God, not in his greatness, and the power of our prayers has the same Source, an all powerful God! This truth should encourage you to pursue righteousness, confess your sins and repent quickly, and pray with expectancy that your prayers touch the heart of the All Powerful God! I dare you to test God (not tempt Him). Spurgeon adds "As an

encouragement cheerfully to offer intercessory prayer, remember that such prayer is the sweetest God ever hears, for the prayer of Christ is of this character." As E M Bounds once said "Prayer can do anything that God can do!"

**Charles H. Spurgeon** explains, "Elijah failed in the very point at which he was strongest, and that is where most men fail. In Scripture, it is the wisest man [Solomon,] who proves himself to be the greatest fool; just as the meekest man, Moses, spoke hasty and bitter words. Abraham [the father of the faithful] failed in his faith, and Job [synonymous with patience,] in his patience; so, he who was the most courageous of all men, fled from an angry woman. He could stand face to face with that woman's husband, and say to him, in answer to his false accusation, 'I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim;' yet he was afraid of Jezebel, and he fled from her, and suffered such faintness of heart that he even 'requested for himself that he might die.' This was, I suppose, to show us that Elijah was not strong by nature, but only in the strength imparted to him by God; so that, when the divine strength was gone, he was of no more account than anybody else. When grace is for a time withdrawn, the natural Elijah is as weak as any other natural man; it is only when supernatural power is working through him that he rises out of himself, and so the grace of God is glorified in him."[\[Elijah Fainting\]](#)

**Spurgeon** shares the following in his [Lectures to My Students](#): "The times most favorable to fits of depression, so far as I have experienced, may be summed up in the a brief catalogue. First among them, I must mention the hour of great success. When at last a long-cherished desire is fulfilled, when God has been glorified greatly by our means, and a great triumph achieved, then we are apt to faint."

**A nature like ours** (3663)[\(homoiopathes](#) from [homoios](#) = similar + [pathos](#) = passion) literally means similar passion and so describes one who is liable to be affected in the same way. Stated another way it describes those having the same kinds of feelings or desires. Only in Acts 14:15+ ("We are also men **of the same nature** as you") and James 5:17. This word emphasizes common humanity.

**Steven Cole** - God doesn't weigh the value of the prayers by their length or by how many people get together to pray the same thing or by how much you agonize in your prayers. Although Jesus sometimes spent the entire night in prayer, most of the prayers recorded in the Bible are short. The Lord's prayer is *really* short! Even if you've only got a few minutes, you can still devote the time to prayer. Sometimes we think, "If we can just get a lot of people praying, it will be more effective." But our text says, "a righteous man," not "a really big group of righteous men." The more who pray, the more get blessed when God answers. So it is good to enlist as many in prayer as possible. But if it's just you and God, the prayer may be as powerfully effective as if a whole group prays. Also, it doesn't say that the righteous man has to agonize for it to be effective....God answers our prayers on the basis of His grace through Jesus Christ, not on the basis of our working up certain feelings....Elijah had his ups and downs, but he prayed and God answered. So even though you have your ups and downs, pray! The power of prayer is not with the man, but with our God.[\(James 5:16b-18 The Power of Prayer\)](#)

**And he prayed earnestly that it would not rain** - He prayed earnestly" is more literally "with prayer he prayed." And so most of the translations (in my opinion) are somewhat misleading as they say Elijah prayed "fervently" or "earnestly." Young's Literal Translation (not easy to read but often has some insightful findings) renders it "with prayer he did pray." What does that mean? Simply that HE PRAYED! Remember that the context is that James is trying to ENCOURAGE the believers to pray. And he began by saying they are human just like Elijah. Why would James then imply that there was something extra special about the way he prayed? Now, that said, the text of 1 Kings 18:42 does tell us Elijah "crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees." Can you picture the scene? His posture wasn't so special, but his persistence was! What do I mean? Notice 1 Kings 18:43-44 notice the numbers **"seven times...seventh."** I would say that is similar to what Paul said when He commanded us to "Pray without ceasing" (1 Th 5:17). Elijah kept on praying. So he prayed with persistence. He may have been (in fact probably was) **fervent** (which means "characterized by intense emotion") but the 1 Kings 18 text does not tell us specifically.

**THOUGHT** - Although the context is different I can personally attest to power of persistent prayer. My father prayed for me for 20 years before I was saved by grace through faith at age 39. Two of my four children were saved soon after my salvation and we were all baptized at the same time (my wife was also baptized having been saved about a year before me). My other two younger children "went off the reservation" (so to speak), but we kept praying for their salvation and both were saved 20 years later. I am not saying that God will save every unsaved friend or relative if you pray for them for 20 years, but I am saying that God hears persistent prayer, like Elijah's "seven times" prayers. So be encouraged and keep on praying for those prodigals and those dear friends who are lost. God is not finished yet! (See [My Testimony of God's Grace](#))

**Constable** comments that "This verse is not a call for fervent prayer but a call for prayer!"

A s **Hiebert** says "Although but an ordinary man, he prayed an audacious prayer, and that prayer brought about a crucial

meteorological change." ([James Commentary](#))

The event to which James refers is found in 1 Kings...

Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." (1 Ki 17:1)

(ED: While this is not a prayer per se, Elijah's announcement was clearly based on the fact that he had prayed and believed God would answer his prayer. Did the Spirit give him that inner assurance? The text does not say, but that is certainly possible.)

Now it happened after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the **third year**, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth." (1 Ki 18:1)

**He prayed** (4336) see note above on [proseuchomai](#). Here in James 5:17 uses the noun [proseuche](#) and the verb [proseuchomai](#). (*proseuchē prosēuxato*) which intensifies the force of the verb. This repetitive pattern is a Hebraism signifying intensity in both the Old and New Testaments (Gen. 2:17; 31:30; Jonah 1:10; Luke 22:15; John 3:29; Acts 5:28).

Literally the Greek reads "**with prayer He prayed.**" Hiebert explains that "The intensification is generally understood to point to the inner attitude of Elijah and rendered "prayed fervently" or "earnestly" But it is possible to understand the intensification as relating to the activity described. Thus Adamson holds that James means "not that Elijah put up a particularly fervent prayer but that praying was precisely what he did." Then the stress points out that in facing his situation, Elijah specifically resorted to prayer, giving himself wholly to it. Thus Hughes takes James to mean "that nothing else than his prayer produced the long drought." ([James Commentary](#))

It has been said that today's church has many organizers, it has few agonizers; many who pay, but few who pray; many resters, but few wrestlers; many who are enterprising, but few who are interceding.

**Samuel Chadwick** said, "The one concern of the Devil is to keep saints from prayer. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray." I challenge all of us this morning to increase the time we spend in earnest prayer. Whether troubled or happy, whether sick or sinful, or straying, handle life with prayer.

**And it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months-** Presumably this is speaking of Palestine, not the entire world. God's people (who should have known better) were practicing overt idol worship and certainly were deserving of God withholding His hand of blessing from their land.

Jesus alluded to this same event in Luke

But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. (Luke 4:25-26+)

**Norman Geisler** - Both here and in Luke 4:25 it speaks of a three and one-half year drought in the days of Elijah. But in 1 Kings 17:1 (and 18:1) it refers to the drought being three years. **SOLUTION:** There are three possible solutions here. First, the three years may be a round number. Second, the third year in Kings may be reckoned from the time of Elijah's stay with the widow of Zarephthah, not the full time of the drought. Third, it is possible that the drought began six months before the famine did, making both passages precise but referring to different things. (When Critics Ask)

**Would not rain...did not rain** (1026)(**brecho**) to moisten or make wet as with tears (Lk 7:38, 44+), to send rain or cause to rain (Mt 5:45). In Luke 17:29 "on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it **rained** fire and brimstone." In Rev 11:6 the two witnesses possess "the power to shut up the sky, so that rain ([huetos](#)) **will not fall** during the days of their prophesying."

**Gilbrant - Classical** writers understood the verb *brechō* to mean "to make wet," "to be rained upon," "to steep," "to drench," and various other verbal ideas whose main concept is "to (make) wet" (Liddell-Scott). In the papyri *brechō* is particularly used of "to irrigate" the land (Moulton-Milligan). Metaphorically it refers to heavy drinkers (thus "to be tipsy"). The second major definition is "to rain," a meaning frequently used both literally and figuratively (Liddell-Scott). *Brechō* appears 15 times in the **Septuagint**, each of which occurs in canonical material. Most often (11 times) the Hebrew stem *mtr* ("to rain, to be rained upon") stands behind *brechō*; however, as shown below, its definition range is far from simple. Genesis 2:5 comments that God "had not caused it to rain upon the earth." Some believe that previously the ground was apparently watered by a heavy mist God sent for this purpose. It is not entirely clear when rain was introduced into the scheme of creation. *Brechō* is used in a somewhat figurative sense of the burning sulfur the Lord "rained down" upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24), and of the hail He "rains down" upon Egypt (Exodus 9:23; cf. Ezekiel 38:22). Positively, the Psalmist employed (through the Septuagint translators) *brechō* of the manna and quail that were

"rained down" upon Israel in the desert (Psalm 78:24,27). The classical sense of "to wet" or "to drench" comes through in Psalm 6:6 (of the drenching of the bed with tears). Literal rain is referred to in Amos 4:7; God withheld it as a form of discipline. Joel (2:23) understands rain as a symbol of prosperity and success, while Ezekiel seems to use it as a figure of spiritual cleansing (Ezek 22:24). The literal usage dominates the seven instances of *brechō* in the New Testament. In Matthew 5:45 it occurs in a figure of God's impartiality: He allows it to rain upon the just and unjust. Similarly in James the literal meaning comes through. Elijah prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain until he prayed that it would (James 5:17; cf. the role of the two "witnesses" [prophets] in Revelation 11:6). Luke, who is responsible for three occurrences, employed it in the more secular sense. The woman's tears "wet" Jesus' feet (Luke 7:38,44). Alluding to the Old Testament account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Luke utilized the terminology of the Septuagint: fire and sulfur "rained down" from heaven (as judgment from God). So too will the coming (revelation) of the Son of Man (Luke 17:29f.). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Brecho** - 6v in NT - fall(1), rain(2), rained(1), sends rain(1), wet(2).

Mt. 5:45; Lk. 7:38; Lk. 7:44; Lk. 17:29; Jas. 5:17; Rev. 11:6

**Brecho** in the **Septuagint** -

Gen. 2:5; Gen. 19:24; Exod. 9:23; Ps. 6:6; Ps. 78:24; Ps. 78:27; Isa. 5:6; Isa. 34:3; Ezek. 22:24; Ezek. 38:22; Joel 2:23; Amos 4:7;

**Related Resource:**

- [Franklin Kirksey - Where Are the Elijahs?](#) - Excerpts - Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe writes, "Some may ask, 'Where is the LORD God of Elijah?' (2 Kings 2:14). Perhaps the better question is, where are the Elijahs?"[1] Where are the Elijahs of God? James Gilmour (1843-1891) of Mongolia writes, "Do not we rest in our day too much on the arm of flesh? Cannot the same wonders be done now as of old? Do not the eyes of the Lord still run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those who put their trust in Him? Oh, that God would give me more practical faith in Him! Where is now the Lord God of Elijah? He is waiting for Elijah to call on Him.".....

Dr. F. B. Meyer (1847-1929) writes, "Elijah grew up like the other lads of his age. In his early years he probably did the work of a shepherd on those wild hills. As he grew to manhood, his erect figure, his shaggy locks, his cloak of camel's hair, his muscular, sinewy strength — which could out strip the fiery coursers of the royal chariot and endure excessive physical fatigue — distinguished him from the dwellers in lowland valleys. But in none of these would he be specially different from the men who grew up with him in the obscure mountain hamlet of Thisbe, whence he derived the name of Tishbite. There were many among them as lithe, and swift, and strong, and capable of fatigue, as he. We must not look to these things for the secret of his strength.....

Leonard Ravenhill (1907-1994) writes, "We know Elijah was 'a man of like passions as we are,' but alas! we are not men of like prayer as he was!" One praying man stands as a majority with God! Today God is bypassing men—not because they are too ignorant, but because they are too self-sufficient. Brethren, our abilities are our handicaps, and our talents are our stumbling blocks!"[4] Ravenhill notes, "Elijah prayed, not for the destruction of the idolatrous priests, nor for thunderbolts from heaven to consume rebellious Israel, but that the glory of God and the power of God might be revealed.".....

Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe writes, "The title 'man of God' was given to Moses (Deut. 33:1), then to Samuel (1 Sam. 9:6-7), Elijah (1 Kings 2:9-13), Elisha (2 Kings 4:9), and Timothy (1 Tim. 6:11). You need not be a prophet to be a godly person. . . ."[8] The name "Elijah" means, "The Lord – Yahweh or Jehovah – is my God", or "The Lord is my strength". Of all the things he was and all the things he was not, he was a man of God!.....

Dr. Adrian Rogers (1931-2005) asks and explains, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah? [2 Kings 2:14] Where is He, friend? He's in the same place He's always been. Do you know what I want to ask you tonight? Where are the Elijahs of God? and where are the Elisha's and where are the people who will say oh, God, oh, God, I want a double portion of the Spirit to be upon me."[2 Ki 2:9] In similar fashion, Leonard Ravenhill writes, "To the question, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' [2 Kings 2:14] we answer, 'Where He has always been—on the throne!' But where are the Elijahs of God?"

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**Elijah: A Man of Like Nature by Eugene Britnell (from Christianity Magazine, 1987)**

ANY MAN WHOSE life, influence and relation to the God of the universe is such that he can turn the rain off and on like a faucet in the kitchen, multiply food, raise the dead, defeat 450 false prophets, call fire from above, live in the person of another, and appear at the glorification of the Son of God is worthy of our investigation, appreciation and emulation—to the extent that we are able! Elijah

was such a man. This man, whose name meant "my God is Jehovah," has been called "the grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever produced." He is mentioned about fifty times in the Bible. "Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead" is all that is given us to know of his parentage and locality. Of interest and encouragement to us is the fact that the Bible says he "was a man with a nature like ours" (James 5:17).

**Elijah and Ahab** - Elijah's introduction, in what we may call the first act of his life, is of the most startling description. He suddenly appears before Ahab, of whom it is said that he "did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him" (1 Kings 16:33). He prophesied a three-year drought in Israel, and proclaimed the vengeance of God for the apostasy of the king. Following his condemnation of the wicked king, God called him away to hide by the Brook Cherith where he was fed by ravens. Jezebel had killed many prophets of God, and would have killed Elijah. It is sometimes necessary for us to flee into the "desert." God's messengers have often been invited to a desert place to rest awhile (Mark 6:31). Moses spent forty years in the wilderness and forty days in Horeb. Much of the life of John the Baptist was divided between the desert and the prison. Paul went into Arabia, and our Lord began His ministry by fasting for forty days.

**Elijah and the Widow** Elijah was next sent to Zarephath where he met a widow who was gathering sticks to kindle a fire to cook her last meal. She had only a handful of flour and a little oil left. By his grace and power, Elijah caused the flour and oil to last until it rained, "according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah" (1 Kings 17:16). Following this, the widow's son died. Elijah revived him by crying out, "O Lord my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him." The woman said, "Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is the truth."

**Elijah at Mt. Carmel** This is a chapter in his life that thrills all God-fearing people. God was now ready for a great miracle to show the idolaters and the whole world that He was "God in Israel" (1 Kings 18:36). Elijah called upon the people to choose between God and Baal. The odds against him were 450 to 1! At his insistence, the prophets of Baal prepared an animal sacrifice, placed it on the wood, but put no fire under it. Elijah did likewise. Then he said, "You call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God." Well, they got ready and said, "O Baal, hear us!" But no one answered. You see, an idol may have ears but it cannot hear, and a mouth but it cannot speak (Psalm 115). Elijah chided them for their failure. He then took twelve stones-respectful of God's arrangement—and prepared an altar. When he called upon God, "Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench." Glory to God! When He does something, He does it right.

**Elijah and Jezebel** After hearing of the death of the prophets, Jezebel vowed to kill Elijah within a day. He escaped into the wilderness and prayed to die. He was fed by an angel. Then he went to Horeb where he complained to God, "I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." Perhaps that will help us to understand why, at times, we have a nature like his. But God assured him that seven thousand in Israel had not given in to Baal.

**"O Troubler of Israel"** After failing to defeat or even answer Elijah, this is what Ahab called him. Where have we heard that before? Those who trouble spiritual Israel today are those who "have forsaken the commandments of the Lord," not those who have objected to their iniquity.

**Elijah and John the Baptist** The Old Testament closes with a warning or promise from God that He would change laws and leaders, and that the transition would be led by a man who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah (Malachi 4:5; Luke 1:17). Some thought Jesus was Elijah, but He applied the prophecy to John the Baptist (Matthew 17:10–13). What a compliment!

**Elijah and the Transfiguration** In the presence of Peter, James and John, Jesus was transfigured. "His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." And who appeared on that great occasion? Moses and Elijah! They talked with Jesus. That event proves at least two important things: (1) the immortality of the soul (as also the reviving of the widow's son); (2) that God no longer speaks through Moses and Elijah (the law and prophets), but rather through His Son who has been given all authority (Matthew 17:5; 28:18). As we close, let us remember that Paul used Elijah to prove that God will always have a "remnant" of faithful people (Romans 11:2–5). And, if Elijah were alive here today, he would ask us all, "How long will you falter between two opinions?" We must choose to serve God, or the various idols of the world. We cannot serve both!

**James 5:18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.**

NET James 5:18 Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land sprouted with a harvest.

GNT James 5:18 καὶ πλιν προσῆ ἔστο, καὶ οἱ ροντὶς εἶτε δῶκεν καὶ γένεται στησεν τὸν καρπὸν αὐτὸς.

NLT James 5:18 Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.

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

ESV James 5:18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

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

CSB James 5:18 Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its fruit.

NIV James 5:18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

NKJ James 5:18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

NRS James 5:18 Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

YLT James 5:18 and again he did pray, and the heaven did give rain, and the land did bring forth her fruit.

NAB James 5:18 Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the earth produced its fruit.

NJB James 5:18 then he prayed again and the sky gave rain and the earth gave crops.

GWN James 5:18 Then he prayed again. It rained, and the ground produced crops.

BBE James 5:18 And he made another prayer, and the heaven sent down rain and the earth gave her fruit.

■ 1Ki 18:18,42-45 Jer 14:22 Ac 14:17

■ James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## GOD ANSWERED ELIJAH'S PRAYER

**Then he prayed again** - This summarizes the account in 1 Kings 18

Now Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower." 42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees. 43 He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go back" seven times. 44 It came about at the seventh time, that he said, "Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.'" 45 In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. 46 Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel. (1 Ki 18:41-46)

Note that critics say James was wrong because the passage above does not mention prayer. However the phrase in verse 42 where he "put his face between his knees" is surely implies an attitude of prayer! And do not miss the fact that Elijah's prayer was based on God's Word, a great pattern for all of us. In other words 1 Kings 18:1 records "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth." This is proper "claiming" of the promises of God!

**He prayed** ([4336](#)) see note above on [proseuchomai](#).

**And the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit**- The sky poured rain is a personification reverentially used by Jesus as a substitute for the Name of Yahweh. And so God answered Elijah's prayer just as He had promised in 1 Ki 18:1. The fact that **the earth produced its fruit** points out this was not just a brief sprinkling of raindrops but was a soil softening and seed nourishing downpour that brought the dry land to life and verdant fertility!

**Davids** - The example of Elijah encourages one to prayer, while the picturesque presentation would appeal to those in need at a very deep level, whether or not James is conscious of this psychological power. Prayer, then, is effective. The righteous members of the community dare release the power of great Elijah, for God will hear them as well.\*

**Stevenson** comments that "the prophet's communion with God was so intimate that the Spirit could reveal to him not only the purposes of the Lord in these respects, but also the very time when they would come to pass." (James Speaks for Today)

**Michael Andrus** on Elijah's effective praying - Elijah's prayers were powerful and effective. Why? I suggest two reasons: faith and fervency. His faith is obvious. Before there was even a cloud, Elijah could hear (evidently with the ears of faith) the sound of a heavy rain. Dr. Guthrie, a great Scottish preacher, prayed in the morning service one Sunday that it would rain. As he returned to church in the evening his little daughter said, "Papa, here's the umbrella." "What do we need that for?" he asked. "You prayed for rain this morning, didn't you," she responded. They took an umbrella, and when they came home they were glad for its shelter. O, the faith of

a child! Another element was fervency, evident in Elijah's posture and in the seven times he sent his servant to look. **How many times have we gone back to God seven times about the same issue?** Do you know what James' nickname was in the early church? They called him "Old Camel-knees." Now most of us wouldn't consider that to be particularly flattering! But I think James didn't mind, for it was a reference to the callouses that resulted from spending so much time on his knees in prayer. In other words, James didn't just talk about prayer; he didn't just write about prayer; he prayed. He walked the talk. ([James 5:13-20 Handle with Prayer](#))

#### Related Resource:

- James 5:17-18 - [The patience of Job—why is Job famous for being patient](#)

### James 5:19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,

NET James 5:19 My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back,

GNP James 5:19 δελφο μου, ν τις ν μ ν πλανη π τς ληθε ας κα πιστρ ψ τις α τ ν,

NLT James 5:19 My dear brothers and sisters, if someone among you wanders away from the truth and is brought back,

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

ESV James 5:19 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back,

ASV James 5:19 My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him;

CSB James 5:19 My brothers, if any among you strays from the truth, and someone turns him back,

NIV James 5:19 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back,

NKJ James 5:19 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,

NRS James 5:19 My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another,

YLT James 5:19 Brethren, if any among you may go astray from the truth, and any one may turn him back,

NAB James 5:19 My brothers, if anyone among you should stray from the truth and someone bring him back,

NJB James 5:19 My brothers, if one of you strays away from the truth, and another brings him back to it,

GWN James 5:19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you wanders from the truth, someone can bring that person back.

BBE James 5:19 My brothers, if one of you has gone out of the way of the true faith and another has made him see his error,

- **if any among you strays:** Ps 119:21,118 Pr 19:27 Isa 3:12 1Ti 6:10,21 2Ti 2:18 2Pe 3:17 Jude 1:11

- **and one turns him back:** Jas 5:20 Eze 34:4,16 Mt 18:15 Lu 22:32 Ga 6:1 Heb 12:12,13 Jude 1:22,23

- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## OPERATION RESCUE

**MacArthur** prefaces these last two passages - There is no connecting link with the previous section (James 5:13-18); rather James is now turning to a new and final concluding thought. The concluding two verses describe a different group from the weary, weak, persecuted believers who need to be ministered to by the elders. To the ministry of restoring struggling believers James adds the ministry of reconciling the unsaved in the church. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – James)

Others feels that there is a link between the previous and the last two passages because both deal with sin - primarily through prayer in the previous passages and now primarily through personal intervention in these last two passages.

Others like **Michael Andrus** say this is not referring to unbelievers but believers - That James is talking about straying believers and

not about unbelievers seems obvious. He addresses them as brothers and states clearly, "if one of you should wander from the truth." This may refer to doctrinal deviation or moral deviation; whatever it is, it is serious because it can result in a multitude of sins....Because this comes at the end of a passage devoted to prayer, I would have to say that the chief means of bringing back a straying saint is probably earnest prayer. And it works. I have shared with you about my little sister, who walked away from the Lord at age 15. My parents prayed for her for 41 years, and shortly before my dad's death at the age of 91 she came back and her husband was gloriously converted. We were at her home last month for a family reunion, and it was a huge blessing to observe the incredible spiritual growth in her life and in her husband's. ([Sermon](#)) ([See more discussion of whether this refers to rescuing believers or unbelievers or what I favor rescuing both](#)).

**David Guzik** - James concludes with this because this is exactly what he has endeavored to do through this challenging letter – to confront those who have wandered from a living faith, endeavoring to save their souls from death, by demanding that they not only hear the word, but do it, because a living faith will have its proof.

**Gregg Allen** - It would be hard to imagine a more fitting and more practical conclusion to the most practical manuals on pastoral counseling you'll find anywhere. James isn't content with the idea of he being the only one working toward the "good" of the people of God. He turns, in these closing words, to his readers - to us - and calls us to take all that we have learned in this letter and work toward one another's good as well. ([Rescuing One Another](#))

**My brethren** - Again he is addressing this exhortation to the members of the body of Christ.

**Spurgeon** - Read the verse and you will see that it was that of a backslider from the visible church of God. The words, 'If any of you,' must refer to a professed Christian.

**If any among you strays from the truth** - The phrase **among you** would identify them as those who were in the church body, in **among** the ones he identifies as genuine believers ("My brethren"). These would be tantamount to professors (of Christ) but not possessors (of Christ). In other words, they are not truly born again, regenerate, new creatures in Christ! This reminds us even of Jesus' 12 disciples, one of whom, Judas, did not believe in Him. The truth is most likely the **Word of Truth** (the Gospel) for in James' first use of "truth" he wrote

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth (BORN AGAIN) by the **word of truth**, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. ([James 1:18+](#))

The other use of truth by James is in James 3

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against **the truth**. ([James 3:14+](#))

**Comment** - While there is some disagreement on the interpretation of the truth in James 3:14, most agree that it is the truth of the Gospel. (Hiebert)

**If...strays from the truth** - The Greek construction is a third class conditional statement which means that straying from the truth is a possibility that is likely to occur. Truth is not relative as many in our culture have been deceived to believe (including many in church). So when one strays from truth they are straying from objective truth, and I believe primarily the truth of the Gospel.

**Cole** adds - the Bible asserts that there is absolute spiritual truth that saves the soul, and absolute error that damns. Paul told the Galatians that if they believed in a different gospel than the one that he had preached to them, they were damned (Gal. 1:6-9; see also 2 Cor. 11:3-4). In 2 Thessalonians 2:10, Paul mentions "those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved." So the truth is not a subjective opinion or preference. It is something objective that must be believed if you are to be saved! The essential truth is the gospel, that we are saved solely by God's grace through faith in Christ, apart from our good works, but that genuine saving faith results in good works (Eph. 2:8-10). ([James 5:19-20 God's Search & Rescue Ministry](#))

**Albert Barnes on strays from the truth** - Either doctrinally and speculatively, by embracing error; or practically, by falling into sinful practices. Either of these may be called "erring from the truth," because they are contrary to what the truth teaches and requires. ([James 5 Commentary](#))

**Steven Cole on strays from the truth** - In verse 19, James says that this person has strayed "**from the truth**." In verse 20, he mentions turning him from "**the error of his way**." To **stray from the truth** implies departing from the truth of the gospel, or some core Christian doctrine. It may also include moral deviation, but that is more in focus in the phrase, "**the error of his way**." The point is that doctrinal error and sin are usually intertwined (**ED: YOUR BELIEF WILL/SHOULD DETERMINE YOUR BEHAVIOR. DOCTRINE PRECEDES DUTY**). Sometimes a person embraces false doctrine because he has fallen into serious sin, and he needs

to deny sound doctrine to justify his sin. At other times, the person embraces some serious doctrinal error, and before long his false doctrine opens the door for him to embrace sin. If you're seeking to help restore a person who is espousing some doctrinal error, you probably need to probe for some underlying sin. So, James is acknowledging that professing Christians will stray from the truth, both doctrinally and morally. We do not know their true heart condition before God until we seek to restore them and see how they respond. ([James 5:19-20 God's Search & Rescue Ministry](#))

**William Barclay** expands on the meaning of **the truth** - In this passage there is set down the great differentiating characteristic of Christian **truth**. It is something from which a man can wander. It is not only intellectual, philosophical and abstract; it is always moral **truth**. This comes out very clearly when we go to the New Testament and look at the expressions which are used in connection with truth. **Truth** is something which a man must love (2 Thessalonians 2:10); it is something which a man must obey (Galatians 5:7); it is something which a man must display in life (2 Corinthians 4:2); it is something which must be spoken in love (Ephesians 4:15); it is something which must be witnessed to (John 18:37); it is something which must be manifested in a life of love (1 John 3:19); it is something which liberates (John 8:32); and it is something which is the gift of the Holy Spirit, sent by Jesus Christ (John 16:13-14). Clearest of all is the phrase in John 3:21, he who does what is true. That is to say, Christian truth is something which must be done. It is not only the object of the search of the mind; it is always moral truth issuing in action. It is not only something to be studied but something to be done; not only something to which a man must submit only his mind but something to which he must submit his whole life. ([Commentary](#))

**Illustration** - In hiking, the most important rule of all is that the hiker stay on the trail. You must stay on established paths, carefully follow the directional markers, and not deviate from the trail. To wander from the trail can be dangerous. James would have agreed with that rule, and would have stressed it as an important rule in the Christian walk as well. He begins these closing words in his letter by describing a dangerous situation, "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth ..." (Gregg Allen)

**Brian Bell** - Have you ever rescued someone from drowning? Often victims will fight their rescuers in the hysteria of that terrifying moment. 1. This often happens to those floundering spiritually also! ([Sermon](#))

**Bennet** makes an interesting point that "there are times when it is appropriate to leave someone to the hardness of his heart. For example: (1) Matt 18:17 — Have no fellowship with an unrepentant sinner who will not hear the church's admonition. (2) Rom 16:17 — Avoid those who cause divisions contrary to sound teaching. (3) Titus 3:10-11 — Reject someone who stirs up division after two warnings. (4) 2 Tim 3:5 — Avoid those who live a consistent life of evil opposed to the truth. ([Sermon](#))

**Strays** ([4105](#)) ([planao](#) from **plane** which describes "a wandering" and gives us our English word "planet") means literally made to wander and so to go (active sense) or be led (passive sense as of sheep in Mt 18:12-13) astray. Note that in this passage **planao** is in the **passive voice** which indicates an outside force or influence is causing the deception that leads one down the wrong path. Specifically this would be an allusion to our [fallen sinful flesh](#). In believers the power of that old "taskmaster" **Sin** was rendered ineffective at the Cross (cf Ro 6:6+). unfortunately it is still latent in our mortal bodies and is ever ready to "pounce" on us if we give it an opportunity.

**Paul** uses **planao** twice to describe the deception of deceivers!

But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, (actively) **deceiving** and (passively) **being deceived**. (2 Ti 3:13)

**Paul** uses **planao** to describe our state before we were saved

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, **deceived** (**planao** in [present tense](#) - continually), enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. (Titus 3:3)

In Hebrews 3:10 God said of the majority of the nation of Israel in the OT...

"THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY' (**planao**) IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS' (ED: THAT IS MOST WERE NOT GENUINE BELIEVERS);

**Peter** describes believer's state before Jesus saved us

For you **were continually straying** (**planao** in [present tense](#)) like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. (1 Pe 2:25)

James used **planao** earlier to warn against straying from the truth, writing...

**Do not be deceived** ([present imperative with a negative](#)) my beloved brethren. (James 1:16+)

**Comment** - The command is to stop being deceived (led astray) or don't begin to be led astray.

**Truth** (225) (**aletheia**) from **a** = indicates following word has the opposite meaning ~ without + **lanthano** = to be hidden or concealed, to escape notice) has the literal sense of that which contains nothing hidden. **Aletheia** is that which is not concealed. **Aletheia** is that which is seen or expressed as it really is. Aletheia is that which has certainty and validity and is in essence the opposite of plane which is translated **error** in James 5:20. In the present context truth is most likely the Gospel as explained above.

**Aletheia** is used 3x in James - James 1:18, James 3:14, James 5:19.

**And one turns him back** - Note what James does not say if "one pastor or church leader turns him back." No! Every believer is responsible to carry out this rescue ministry! But how? Not relying on their clever psychological ploys or power of personal persuasion but by relying solely and wholly on the Holy Spirit's enabling power. **One** brother (or sister) who is walking in the power of the Spirit can/will be used by God to turn a wayward sinner (either regeneration for unbelieving professors or restoration/revival for wandering believers).

A similar pattern is described by Paul in Galatians 6:1 Paul exhorting the believers

Brethren (FELLOW BELIEVERS), even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual (NOT JUST YOU WHO ARE THE CHURCH LEADERS), **restore** (**katastizo**) in the **present imperative** - which calls for dependence on the **Holy Spirit to obey this command** such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. (Galatians 6:1+)

**Steven Cole** speaks to this rescue ministry one which is for every believer - This means that, unless you're a relatively new Christian, if you know of someone who is straying from the truth, you must go to him (or her) to help turn him back to the Lord. (I'll give specific instructions at the end of this message.) If you feel inadequate to do this, you should inform an elder who can guide you. But to ignore someone who is straying is like a member of the search and rescue team sitting at home watching TV while someone is lost in the woods. It's not the loving thing to do! **Searching** is required because professing believers who fall into sin seldom stay with the flock (**ED**: I WOULD ADD THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF MANY GENUINE BELIEVERS ENTANGLED IN SIN - THEY ARE TOO EMBARRASSED TO RETURN TO THE FLOCK). We must go after them. If you know of someone who made a profession of faith, but who has dropped out of the church, you need to go looking for him to find out what's wrong. Rescue is required because it is seldom that such straying persons find their way back on their own, without someone to guide them. The enemy confuses their sense of direction. Or, they are ashamed at what they've done, so they need to be assured of God's forgiveness if they will repent and confess their sins. They also need instruction on how not to stray again, so that they don't repeat the process. They need someone who knows God and the way back, to teach them God's ways to avoid and resist sin. ([James 5:19-20 God's Search & Rescue Ministry](#))

**Turns...back** (1994) (**epistrepho** from **epi** = motion toward + **strepho** = twist, turn quite around or reverse) means to revert, to turn about, to turn around, to turn toward, to return and figuratively to convert. The idea is a definite turn to God in conduct as well as in one's mind. Study the 39 uses below and note the association with repentance and conversion.

While God can choose not to use human instruments to turn a sinner, most often He does use men and women as Spurgeon said...

Most persons have been convinced by the pious conversation of sisters, by the holy example of mothers, by the minister, by the Sabbath-school, or by the reading of tracts or perusing Scripture. Let us not therefore believe that God will often work without instruments; let us not sit down silently and say, 'God will do his own work.' It is quite true he will; but then he does his work by using his children as instruments....It may not appear so brilliant a thing to bring back a backslider as to reclaim a harlot or a drunkard, but in the sight of God it is no small miracle of grace, and to the instrument who has performed it shall yield no small comfort. Seek ye, then, my brethren, those who were of us but have gone from us; seek ye those who linger still in the congregation but have disgraced the church, and are put away from us, and rightly so, because we cannot countenance their uncleanness; seek them with prayers, and tears, and entreaties, if peradventure God may grant them repentance **that they may be saved.**"

**John Broger** said, "You demonstrate biblical love when you take steps to restore a fellow-believer overtaken in sin. This not only encourages a fallen believer to return to his first love of Jesus Christ, but it also gives others involved in the restoration process ongoing opportunities to examine the depth of their love to the Lord."

**ILLUSTRATION** - It is dangerous to assume we could never err from the faith or suffer spiritual defeat. Edinburgh Castle was captured only once in the whole history of Scotland. Its defenders thought that the steepness of the rock on one side made it inaccessible and impregnable, so they put no sentries there. In the gray mist of the early morning a little party of the enemy crept up the precipitous slopes and surprised the garrison into surrender. It was captured at its strongest point.

2 Pet.3:17<sub>±</sub> – " You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **be on your guard** ([present imperative](#)) so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness."

1 Cor 10:12 - Therefore let him who thinks he stands **take heed** ([present imperative](#)) that he does not fall.

**THOUGHT** - Note that both of the preceding cautionary commands call for continual watchfulness. Like sentries guarding the entry to our hearts we much continually be alert (cf Pr 4:23<sub>±</sub>). Do not attempt to keep these commands relying on your own natural strength. You MUST have a supernatural Source to successfully carry out these commands! No exceptions! To learn more about this critical spiritual dynamic [see discussion of the our need for the Holy Spirit to obey the NT commands](#) (aka, "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")

#### Related Resources:

- [Backsliding](#)
- [Backsliding-Quotes, Devotionals, Illustrations](#)
- [Are You Entangled?](#)
- [James 5:19-20 Spiritual Restoration](#) - Mp3 Sermon by Kent Hughes

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**Steven Cole** - It's always an anxious moment, especially for families and friends, when someone is reported missing in the wilderness. Search and rescue teams spring into action. We wait expectantly for any word of locating the missing person. It's a moment of great joy if they find the person alive and well, but a time of great sorrow when they're too late. If you are a Christian, then you're a member of God's search and rescue team. But even though every believer is on the team, I find that many never respond to the call to go out into the storm and look for the lost. Can you imagine being lost in the woods, but no one came looking for you? When you finally stagger out to civilization, you ask why no one came looking. One member of the search and rescue team says, "It was really cold and stormy, and there was a good show on TV. So I just prayed for you to be okay." Another says, "I wanted to be sensitive to your feelings. I thought you might be embarrassed if we came looking." Another says, "I wasn't sure you were really lost. It would be judgmental to imply that you actually were lost. Besides, it would be arrogant of me to say that I'm not lost. After all, we all have our own paths on the journey." That's not the kind of search and rescue team that I would want if I were lost!

I admit that what James tells us to do here is one of the most difficult things God asks us to do as Christians, namely, Believers are responsible to help restore straying sinners to the truth. That task is often about as pleasant as trying to help a wounded dog—you're probably going to get bit no matter how gently you try to help. When you're successful, it's a moment of great joy, as when a search and rescue team announces, "We have found him and he is alive and well." Yes! But even the hope of success doesn't make the task any easier. But since you're on God's search and rescue team, you need to learn how to do the job. ([James 5:19-20 God's Search & Rescue Ministry](#))

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**James 5:20 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.**

NET James 5:20 he should know that the one who turns a sinner back from his wandering path will save that person's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

GNP James 5:20 γινωσκτω τι πιστρ ψας μαρτωλ ν κ πλ νης δο ατο σ σει ψυχ ν ατο κ θαντου κα καλ ψει πλ θος μαρτι ν.

NLT James 5:20 you can be sure that whoever brings the sinner back will save that person from death and bring about the forgiveness of many sins.

KJV 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.

ESV James 5:20 let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

ASV James 5:20 let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

CSB James 5:20 let him know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his life from

death and cover a multitude of sins.

NIV James 5:20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

NKJ James 5:20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

NRS James 5:20 you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

YLT James 5:20 let him know that he who did turn back a sinner from the straying of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

NAB James 5:20 he should know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

NJB James 5:20 he may be sure that anyone who can bring back a sinner from his erring ways will be saving his soul from death and covering over many a sin.

GWN James 5:20 Realize that whoever brings a sinner back from the error of his ways will save him from death, and many sins will be forgiven.

BBE James 5:20 Be certain that he through whom a sinner has been turned from the error of his way, keeps a soul from death and is the cause of forgiveness for sins without number.

- **That he who turns a sinner from the error of his way** Jas 5:19
- **will save his soul** : Pr 11:30 Ro 11:14 1Co 9:22 1Ti 4:16 Phm 1:19
- **from death**: Jas 1:15 Pr 10:2 11:4 John 5:24 Rev 20:6
- **will cover a multitude of sins**: Ps 32:1 Pr 10:12 1Pe 4:8
- James 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## RESCUE THE PERISHING

**Let him know** that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way- **Let him know** is present imperative means to keep on letting him know as this is good motivation for speaking truth to sinners. Who is a **sinner**? As noted, some writers feel this refers to a non-believer (e.g., one who is in the church but not in Christ) while others feel this is a believer entangled in sin's deceptive web. I personally think it could refer to either saved or unsaved.

**Let him know** (1097)(ginosko) generally speaks of experiential knowledge, not merely the accumulation of known facts.

**Turns** (1994) see note above on epistrepho. NT uses of **epistrepho** referring to conversion (often with repent or repentance) - Acts 3:19<sub>±</sub> Acts 9:35<sub>±</sub> Acts 11:21<sub>±</sub> Acts 14:15<sub>±</sub> Acts 15:19<sub>±</sub> Acts 26:18<sub>±</sub> Acts 26:20<sub>±</sub> Acts 28:27<sub>±</sub> 2 Cor 3:16 1Th 1:9<sub>±</sub>. So the use of epistrepho in this passage could refer to initial conversion.

**Sinner** (268)(hamartolos from hamartano = deviate, miss the mark) is an adjective (e.g., "that through the commandment sin might become utterly **sinful**" - see Ro 7:13<sub>±</sub>) that is often used as a noun as in James 5:20 (compare Ro 5:19<sub>±</sub>). And when used as a noun it describes those who are continually erring from the way, constantly missing God's mark, living in opposition to His good and acceptable and perfect will. Thus a sinner is one who lives in opposition to the divine will.

**Error** (4106)(plane from planos = deceitful, root idea = wandering; See planao above = "strays") describes a roaming or a wandering and then figuratively a going astray or a wandering out of the right way. **Plane** describes a straying from **truth** (see aletheia above) and thus signifies **error, delusion, deception**. The verbal form planao means to cause to wander off the path, to cause someone to hold a wrong view and so to mislead or deceive.

## TWO PROMISES

Save from death. Cover multitude of sins.

**Will save his soul from death** - If a believer strays and continues to stray after discipline by God, God may take his life.

**Bennett on death** - Following the context of James 5:15, it is assumed that those who have committed sins resulting in sickness

will not be healed, but will die if those sins remain unconfessed. Thus, a brother who comes along to restore the sickly saint can save him from death.

**Michael Andrus** writes "You may actually save his life because the ultimate discipline that God brings upon a straying saint is physical death. Many a Christian, I'm convinced, dies prematurely because of unconfessed, unrepentant sin. If you can bring him back before that point you may save his life. At the same time you can cover over a multitude of sins, a reference to the forgiveness resulting from his repentance, or possibly even to the fact that his restoration prevents him from continuing in gross sin. Now I cannot leave this word about the straying believer without speaking to the straying saint, for there undoubtedly a few in that category here this morning. In fact, we are all susceptible to spiritual wanderlust. The hymn writer put it this way, "["Prone to wander, Lord I fell it. Prone to leave the God I love."](#) We must be aware that sin persisted in will make you sick and can eventually kill you. Deal with it before it does you in!" ([Sermon](#))

**THOUGHT** - Can you detect when a fellow believer starts to stray? Are you truly concerned? What do you normally do? How do you handle it? Are you too harsh? Do you not say anything so as not to "offend"? Is there anyone you know of right now that you should talk to? Will you try to help? Will you wait too long? Who do you need to swim out & rescue? Don't let them go. If they fight you, back off & wait for that right moment & get in there again. Get a life jacket around them. Get them to shore. ([Brian Bell](#))

**Spurgeon** on **will save his soul from death** - This speaks powerfully of the restoration that is possible for those who have sinned. "I know of men of good standing in the gospel ministry, who, ten years ago, fell into sin; and that is thrown in our teeth to this very day. Do you speak of them? You are at once informed, 'Why, ten years ago they did so-and-so.' Brethren, Christian men ought to be ashamed of themselves for taking notice of such things so long afterwards. True, we may use more caution in our dealings; but to reproach a fallen brother for what he did so long ago, is contrary to the spirit of John, who went after Peter, three days after he had denied his Master with oaths and curses."

**Will save** ([4982](#)) (**sozo**) has the basic meaning of rescuing one from great peril. Additional nuances include to protect, keep alive, preserve life, deliver, heal, be made whole. **Sozo** is sometimes used of physical deliverance from danger of perishing (see Mt 8:25; Mt 14:30; Lk 23:35; Acts 27:20, 27:31), physical healing from sickness (Mt 9:21, 22; Mk 5:23, Acts 4:9), and deliverance from demonic possession (Lk 8:36). More often **sozo** refers to **salvation** in a spiritual sense.

**Henry Morris** favors this as a primarily referring to rescue of non-believers - This verse can properly be considered an incentive for soul-winning in general. In context, however, it seems to refer primarily to the particular case being discussed--that of a **professing Christian** whose sin has resulted in divine chastisement in the form of sickness. As long as he persists in his sin, refusing to confess and forsake it, he is in danger of eventually being consigned to physical death (1 Corinthians 5:5; 11:30; 1 Timothy 1:20). This is probably the "sin unto death" mentioned in 1 John 5:16<sup>+</sup>. There is, thus, a great need for concerned Christian friends to try diligently to turn him back (convert) from the dangerous course he is traveling. It is even more urgent if his professed faith in Christ was not genuine in the first place. He then needs to be saved not only from physical death but also from eternal, spiritual death. (Defender's Study Bible Notes)

**Brian Bell** subtitles James 5:20 - The fruits of a soul winner! (5:20) 2-fold reason why we should seek to convert men/women: 1. Save their soul from death (phys death) - or, restoring their fellowship with God. 2. Cover a multitude of sin - stop the influence of their sin (upon them & others).

**Thomas Lea** see this passage applying to **believers and non-believers** - Those who work to return straying believers receive two promises. First, the wanderer is saved **from death**. The repentant wanderer avoided spiritual ruin. Sin destroys, and if people persist in following sin, they will experience eternal separation from God, that is, eternal death (see the clear statement in Jas. 1:13-15). Reclaiming such a person is worth the effort. Some interpreters understand **death** to refer to physical death. They see this type of death as a punishment for sin. The text seems to go farther than this and speak of eternal death, permanent separation from God. Some who wander away from the truth were never under its power. They professed faith in Christ, but they never experienced the power of the gospel in their lives. Their return is a real conversion to Christ. Although they previously professed to know Christ, they were deceived. Others who wander are real Christians who have been enticed by Satan. Their return to Christ helps them to avoid the ruin and destruction of a life of disobedience. They enjoy God's blessing in their soul. Since James has described the person who wanders as **one of you**, he has pictured him as a professing Christian who has wandered from the truth. When the professing Christian returns to commitment to Christ, he avoids the spiritual ruin that would otherwise fall upon him. (Holman New Testament Commentary – Hebrews & James)

**ESV Study Bible** - Not physical death (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30) but spiritual death (cf. 1 John 5:16-17). Timely intervention (see Gal. 6:1; Heb. 3:13) will "save his soul" and bring forgiveness from God. The person who saves the sinner in this case is the person who restores the one who has fallen. Ultimately, of course, only the Lord saves a person. The one who restores the person will **cover** the many **sins** of the one who had strayed, for the one who returns from the way of error receives forgiveness. Again, only God can

cover sin, but Christians can be agents of God's forgiveness.

**Rich Cathers** - Reach out. Rescue the perishing. It might be that James is talking about reaching out to those who have never known the Lord. It might be that James is also talking about reaching out to those who used to walk with the Lord but have gone astray. Either way, the idea is the same. Reach out. When we turn people from their sins and help them turn to the Lord, they will find forgiveness and eternal life. God will hide their multitudes of sins under the blood of Jesus Christ. ([Sermon Notes](#))

**Bennett** notes that "There has been some debate over how to interpret these last two verses. One position takes those wandering as **unbelievers**. The wandering refers to apostasy or something close to it, and the salvation in view is from eternal death (cf. James 1:15). The other interpretation understands those wandering to be **believers**. The wandering then refers to disobedience (Gal 6:1), and salvation is from physical death (cf. James 5:15; 1 Cor 11:30; 1 John 5:16–17). I understand the second interpretation to be correct. Believers are able to fail these tests. Those who do should be corrected and restored. ([Sermon](#))

**Steven Cole** - The first question to answer is, "Is James talking about backsliding believers, or is he talking about evangelizing those who do not know Christ?" The first part of James 5:19 would indicate that James is talking about believers ("**My brethren, if any among you strays...**"). But when James 5:20 talks about saving his soul from death, it sounds like saving a soul from hell. Some assume that James is talking only about believers. Since believers cannot lose their salvation, they interpret James 5:20 as saving the person from physical death as God's discipline for sin. The other approach, which I believe to be correct, is to say that James is writing to the church, but he knows that there are some in the church that have made professions of faith, but they are not genuinely saved. This fits with the overall theme of James, which is to emphasize that true saving faith is not just to make a decision or to say, "I believe in Jesus." True saving faith always, necessarily results in a life of good works. In James 1:22+, he exhorted, "But prove yourselves to be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." In James 2:14+, he asks rhetorically, "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" He states (James 2:17+), "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." (See also, James 2:26+.) ([James 5:19-20 God's Search & Rescue Ministry](#))

**Ronald Blue** does not think James is referring to soul winning - 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. (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

**Warren Wiersbe** - These verses deal with our ministry to a **fellow believer** who strays from the truth and gets into sin.

**Chris Benfield** - There are those who suppose James is speaking of a believer that was once saved, losing his salvation, and being converted to the faith again. This view is in error. The word convert means "to turn toward or turn back." Clearly there would be application for a lost sinner realizing the error of his ways and turning toward the Lord, turning back from the life of sin. However, we must always keep Scripture in context. Keep in mind James is speaking to the brethren, those who have already placed their faith and trust in Christ, receiving salvation. He is speaking of a believer who has erred from the truth, straying from God, realizing his error, and turning back toward God and away from sin. In essence James speaks of biblical repentance. There can be no genuine repentance if one refuses to turn from their sin toward the Lord....We must bear in mind that James is speaking of a wayward believer that has returned unto the Lord. Thus he cannot be dealing with spiritual death, that eternal separation from God in hell. I am convinced James is speaking of premature death due to unrepentant sin in the life of a believer. No doubt many have been taken out of this life because they refused to repent of sin, continuing in activity contrary to their relationship with Christ, and bringing reproach on the Lord and His church. ([Sermon](#))

**Gregg Allen on will cover** - He describes a fellow Christian - one of the "brethren" - as doing the wandering....The meaning of the word that James used (kaluptō) means to "hide" or "cover" something - sometimes even to literally "throw a veil" over something. The Bible tells us that someone who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion (Proverbs 28:13). And that is what James means by "covering a multitude of sins". It isn't a matter of hiding them in a negative sense, but rather of those sins being confessed, atoned for, and forsaken - all to the glory of God's grace. Sin is "covered" only when God looks upon the sinner as 'justified' and made 'righteous' (Psalm 32:1-5; see also Micah 7:18-19). ([Rescuing One Another](#))

**And will cover a multitude of sins** - Covered sins are forgiven sins. Whose sins will be covered? Surely this refers to the one straying.

The picture of **sins** covered here in James 5 presents an interesting contrast with the picture in Proverbs 28:13 where the sinner "covers" his/her sins (aka "secret sins")

He who **conceals** ([Lxx](#) = [epikalupto](#) = covers over or hides) his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion. (Pr 28:13+)

**Comment** - It is worth noting that the same verb [epikalupto](#) used in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) for **conceals** in Pr 28:13 is used by Paul in Romans 4:7<sup>±</sup> showing God's amazing mercy and grace (He will "cover" what we have "covered" when we confess!!!) - "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS **HAVE BEEN COVERED** ([epikalupto](#))."

**Will cover** ([2572](#)) ([kalupto](#) akin to **kalube** = hut, cabin) means to cause something to be covered over literally (as with a lamp, Lk 8:16+, dirt, Lk 23:30+, water of waves, Mt 8:24) and hence not be visible. Figuratively, **kalupto** means to cause something not to be known and thus means to hide, conceal, keep secret (Mt 10:26, 2Cor 4:3, Jas 5:20, 1Pe 4:8).

Kalupto is used in two other passages in a similar context of the covering of sins...

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, But love **covers** ([Lxx](#) = [kalupto](#)) all (NOTE: NOT JUST A MULTITUDE BUT "ALL") transgressions.

1 Peter 4:8<sup>±</sup> Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love**covers** ([kalupto](#) in [present tense](#)) a multitude ([plethos](#)) of sins.

**Comment** - The idea in 1Pe 4:8 is that love covers so as not to harshly condemn or expose faults but to forbear and bear the other's burdens, forgiving and forgetting past offenses. And as James teaches one aspect of this giving love is that it **turns a sinner from the error of his way**.

**Benfield** - When wayward believers return to God, a multitude of sins are covered. The word hide literally means "to cover; to do away with." We can rejoice that our sins are covered in the blood of Christ. When repentance is made, sin is done away with. The wayward believer can be completely restored to fellowship in Christ, having his sin covered and put away, never to be remembered again! ([Sermon](#))

**Moffatt** - So the homily ends – abruptly, even more abruptly than the First Epistle of John, without any closing word of farewell to the readers, abruptly but not ineffectively. The Wisdom writings on which it is modeled end as suddenly.

**Multitude** ([4128](#)) ([plethos](#)) speaks of a fullness, especially a large number (in this case sins!)

**Sins** ([266](#)) see previous note on [hamartia](#)

#### Related Resources:

- James 5:19–20 [How does love cover all wrongs \(Proverbs 10:12\)?](#)
- James 5:20 - [What is the sin unto death?](#)
- James 5:20 - [When is it necessary to rebuke another believer?](#)

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**Walter Kaiser** - Instead of ending his epistle with a greeting or blessing, James ends with a strange statement. Who is the "sinner" to whom James is referring? And is it the sinner who will be saved from death, or the one saving him or her? And from what type of death will the person be saved? Are we still in danger of eternal death if we sin, or is James saying that sin can lead to physical death?

The verse is in fact very significant. James is written in a typical Greek letter form. It was customary to end such a letter with a summary (Jas 5:7–11), an oath (Jas 5:12), a health wish (Jas 5:13–18) and a purpose statement (Jas 5:19–20). This verse, then, should be part of the statement of the purpose of the whole letter. That in itself is reason enough to assign it great importance.

The condition this verse speaks to is described in James 5:19. A Christian ("one of you") has erred. James gives us plenty of illustrations of this in the letter. The errors he addresses are those of partiality and greed, of anger and jealousy. All of them are found within the church. Such error calls for another Christian ("someone") to point it out so that the person can repent and be restored ("bring him back"). That, of course, is what the entire letter is about, bringing the Christians he addresses back to proper Christian behavior. This is indeed the purpose statement of James. Therefore the sinner in this verse is a Christian who has fallen into sin, such as greed or criticism of others.

This Christian brother or sister has erred or gone the wrong way—the text is not talking about an individual sin, however "serious" we may consider it, from which the believer quickly repents. As Jesus points out in Matthew 7:13–14 (which may be the word of Jesus that James is applying here), there are two ways. The way that leads to life is narrow and difficult, while the one leading to death is broad and easy. Unfortunately there are many ways to get from the narrow to the broad way. This Christian (the sinner) has taken one of them and is observed by another, whom we shall call the rescuer. The question is, Who is saved from death—the sinner or the rescuer? Ezekiel 3:18–21 is a discourse on the responsibility of the rescuer. If someone sees a person fall into sin and sits by and does nothing, the sinner will indeed receive the results of the sin, but the potential rescuer will be held guilty of the sinner's blood. In the Old Testament such guilt usually cost the person his life. On the other hand, the rescuer who tries to warn the sinner is free of any guilt, whatever decision the sinner makes. This is certainly the message of Ezekiel (Ezek 33:9; compare 1 Tim

4:16), but is it the message of James?

It seems to me that James's message is that the sinner is the one rescued from death by the rescuer's efforts. There are four reasons for this. First, the fact that sins are covered (an adaptation of Prov 10:12: "Love covers all wrongs") seems to refer to the sinner's sins, not the potential sin of the rescuer. Only the sinner has erred in the context. Second, the word order in the Greek text makes it more likely that it is the sinner who is delivered from death. Third, the very picture of turning a person from his wandering way (a rather woodenly literal translation that brings out James's imagery) suggests that it is the error that is putting the individual in danger of death. The rescuer is presumably safe (although potentially in error, if he or she fails to help the erring Christian).

What, then, is the death that the person is saved from? Certainly sin can lead to physical death in the New Testament, as shown by the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11), as well as by Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 11:30 (compare 1 Cor 5:5). Moreover, in James 5:15–16 we discover that sin may be involved in the illnesses of Christians. Could this be what James is referring to? By turning a sinner from their error a person is saved from physical death, their sins being forgiven?

Attractive as this solution is, it is not the most likely interpretation of the passage. The fact that each of the units of James 5:7–20 is separate and dictated by the letter form means that we should look to the body of the letter (and the call to repentance in Jas 4:1–10) rather than to the "health wish" (Jas 5:13–18) for the meaning of "death" in this verse. Both testaments view death as the end result of sin, usually referring to death in terms of eternal death or condemnation at the last judgment (Deut 30:19; Job 8:13; Ps 1:6; 2:12; Jer 23:12; Jude 23; Rev 20:14). James has already mentioned this in James 1:15: desire gives birth to sin, which results in death. That death is contrasted with the life that God gives (Jas 1:18). Since death and life are parallel ideas, it is likely that they are not physical but eternal (or eschatological, to use the more technical term). This parallel, plus the seriousness of the tone in James 5, indicates that it is this sort of death, the ultimate death that sin brings about, which is in view. What James is saying, then, is that a Christian may err from the way of life. When another Christian attempts to rescue him or her, it is not a hopeless action. Such a rescue effort, if successful, will deliver that erring person from eternal death. That is because the sins will be covered (the language is that of the Old Testament sacrifice; when atonement was made the sin was said to be covered as if literally covered by the blood). It may be one simple action of rescue, but it can lead to the covering of "a multitude of sins." In stating this, James shows his own pastor's heart and encourages all Christians to follow in his footsteps, turning their erring brothers and sisters back from the way of death. ([Hard Sayings of the Bible](#))

## HOW TO CARRY OUT A SEARCH AND RESCUE MISSION!

**Steven Cole** sums up James 5:19-20 giving specific instructions on how to carry out a search and rescue ministry, reminding all believers "You're on God's search and rescue team. Here are your specific instructions:

**(1) Who should go?** If you have knowledge of the sin and you have a relationship with the person, you're it! Truth is most often received through loving relationships.

**(2) Get the facts.** Do not go on hearsay or gossip. If someone tells you of someone else in sin, you should ask, "Have you personally checked out the facts?" Then, direct the one telling you not to talk to anyone else, but to go to the sinning person. If you are the one to go, don't begin with accusations. First, ask questions to determine the truth. Does the issue involve a major doctrine or opinion on a minor issue? Is it a matter of immaturity or spiritual weakness, where you need to help him grow, or of defiantly walking away from God (1 Thess. 5:14)?

**(3) Check your own heart.** There is no room for being judgmental. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Your motive should be to restore the straying one, not to put him in his place or to prove that you're right and he's wrong. Make sure that you are under the control of the Holy Spirit and displaying the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 22-23; 6:1). The word "restore" (Gal. 6:1) was used of mending torn nets and of setting broken bones so that they would heal. Think of how gently you would want a doctor to do that with you, and be that gentle in dealing with a person caught in some sin.

**(4) Pray.** Do not attempt to restore a straying person before you pray for him (James 5:16-18). Prayer puts you in the right place before God, dependent on His grace. Only then are you able to minister to the straying. You can't properly talk to men about God until you've talked to God about men. Especially, pray for the right time and opening.

**(5) Make sure that love for God and love for your brother are your motives for going.** You should desire to please God and you should show genuine concern for your erring brother. Generally, if a man is in sin, another man should go to him. If a woman is in sin, another woman should go. It is not wise for a man to go

alone to a woman (other than his wife or a family member), or for a woman to go alone to talk to a man.

**(6) Go directly to the person.** Do not go behind his back and try to campaign for your point of view or to try to convince others to do what God is calling you to do. Go alone at first. If he listens, you've won your brother. If he refuses to listen, take two or three others. Eventually, it may need to be told to the church (Matt. 18:15-17).

**(7) Think through in advance the proper approach and wording.** Study how Nathan confronted David for starters (2 Sam. 12:1-14). Dr. Howard Hendricks tells of how the wife of a workaholic pastor, who was neglecting his family, asked him to speak with her husband. Hendricks waited until they were alone and casually asked, "Do you smoke?" The pastor was shocked by the question and replied, "Of course not!" Hendricks persisted, "Why not?" He got what he expected: "Because my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit." Then Hendricks sprang the trap: "Then why are you abusing the temple and neglecting your family by overworking?" Pow! Be prepared for the one in sin to accuse you of some shortcoming, and do not get into a verbal war. Just stick to the issue.

If you're sitting in your easy chair by the fire and you know of a brother or sister who is lost in the storm, God asks you to inconvenience yourself. Get up, put on your coat, and go out into the storm to try to rescue your brother. It may not be fun, but it is an expression of genuine love and faith in action. That's what James is all about! ([James 5:19-20 God's Search & Rescue Ministry](#))

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### **AN ERRING BROTHER JAMES 5:19, 20 - James Smith**

The gracious ministry of restoration is here commended. That is how this Epistle closes. No leave-taking but an abrupt close on a high note.

I. Possibility. Possible for even brethren to err. "Brethren if any of you do err."

II. Defection. Err in what? "Err from the truth."

III. Seriousness. Deflection from the truth creates a multitude of sins.

IV. Peril. Death is the peril. "Save a soul from death." What a dreadful peril!

V. Salvation. Whilst the Holy Trinity operates in salvation, here it is human ministry which is stressed. For usually the Triune God operates through the agency of man.

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### **Danger Ahead!**

Read: Jeremiah 26:1-16

He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death. —James 5:20

Messages of judgment in an age of tolerance are about as welcome as a thunderstorm at a picnic.

That was just as true in Jeremiah's day as it is today. Back then, the Lord told the prophet to stand in the court of the temple and speak boldly to the people about their sin. Jeremiah warned the people of Jerusalem that destruction was headed their way if they didn't follow God's laws.

How did they react? The people seized him and said, "You will surely die!" (Jer. 26:8). Jeremiah's life was in danger because he had dared to speak the truth.

In spite of the threats, Jeremiah repeated his warning. After reconsidering, the officials and people said to the priests and false prophets, "This man does not deserve to die. For he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God" (v.16).

Jeremiah's dilemma points out two important truths. First, a message of warning will not be eagerly received by those who need to be warned. Second, we must give the warnings and then trust God to protect us.

See any danger signs on the horizon for people you know? Perhaps you need to do the hard thing: With God's guidance, lovingly give them the warning they need. By Dave Branen ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### **Thinking It Over**

Do you need to give a loving warning to someone?

What do James 5:19-20 and Jude 22-23 say about that?

What should be our attitude in this process? (Gal. 6:1).

**Sometimes love must hurt before it can help.**

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## Listening to Your Brother

Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins. James 5:20

Today's Scripture & Insight: Matthew 18:15–20

"You need to listen to me, I'm your brother!" The plea came from a concerned older brother in my neighborhood and was directed to a younger sibling who was moving farther away from him than the older child was comfortable with. Clearly the older child was better able to judge what was best in the situation.

How many of us have resisted the wise counsel of a brother or sister? If you've had to face the consequences of resisting the good advice of someone more mature, you're not alone.

One of the greatest resources we can have as believers in Jesus is a family—those who are spiritually related because of a common faith in Him. This family includes mature men and women who love God and each other. Like the little brother in my neighborhood, we sometimes need a word of caution or correction to get us back on track. This is particularly true when we offend someone or someone offends us. Doing what's right can be difficult. Yet Jesus's words in Matthew 18:15–20 show us what to do when offenses happen within our spiritual family.

Thankfully, our gracious heavenly Father places in our lives people who are prepared to help us honor Him and others. And when we listen, things go better in the family (v. 15). By: Arthur Jackson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### Reflect & Pray

Father, we praise You for placing us in Your spiritual family. Help us to learn and grow through the wise words and godly behavior of mature believers.

Wisdom grows when we listen to the words of mature believers.

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## The Dalton Gang

He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death. —James 5:20

Today's Scripture: Proverbs 4:10-19

The Dalton brothers were infamous outlaws during the late 1800s in the US. They started out on the right side of the law as officers. But then they followed a gradual descent into crime and became known for bank and train robberies. Their day of reckoning came when they tried to hold up two banks at once. Hearing of the robberies, the townspeople armed themselves and began to fire on the Dalton Gang. When the smoke cleared, Emmett Dalton was the sole survivor.

After serving 15 years in the penitentiary, Emmett was pardoned and set free. While in prison, he had come to see the error of his ways. So when he was released, he wanted to deter young people from a life of crime. Drawing from his own experience, Emmett wrote and starred in a film about the Dalton Gang in which he showed the folly of being an outlaw. In many ways, Emmett's film was telling others: "Do not enter the path of the wicked" (Prov. 4:14).

In a similar way, when we have sinned but have genuinely repented and experienced God's forgiveness, we can tell our own story. We can encourage others not to make the same mistakes we have made. James wrote, "He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death" (5:20). By: Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### Reflect & Pray

If others learn from our mistakes, And it saves them from the pain That we ourselves experienced— Then it wasn't all in vain. —Sper

When we learn from our mistakes, we are less likely to repeat them.