

“Be Patient Therefore Brethren unto the Coming of the Lord”

5:1-11 - ABUSE OF WEALTH; ENCOURAGEMENT TO VICTIMS

Having dealt with the presumption of the wealthy believers, James now extends his scope to the presumption of the class of rich Jews who were persecuting the Ecclesia (vs 1-6; cp Jam 2:6-7). He warns that the day of judgement was coming, and that riches will have a detrimental effect on those who trust in them. This is a prelude to his words of encouragement to the believers (vs 7-11).

This passage is characteristic of the Old Testament prophets who would deal with the faults of God's nation, then harshly denounce the nations about them, and then return to speak words of encouragement to Israel (cp Eze 24:1-27; 25:1 - 28:24; 28:25-26).

5:1-6 - Judgement to come upon rich

James is not writing for the benefit of the wealthy Jews who were doing the oppressing, but to the believers; in order that they may be comforted by the fact that judgement will come upon those who persecute them, that their suffering might be alleviated. His words also highlight the limited value of wealth for which men of the flesh strive.

Although James is writing to those “scattered abroad”, he uses the example of the rich, unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem to illustrate his point. Just as judgement was certain to come upon them in AD 70, so likewise would God bring vengeance upon those who oppressed the believers in other parts of the Roman world. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay” (Rom 12:19).

There are times when the wicked appear more blessed, but their end is sure (cp Psa 73:1-19; Ecc 8:11-14).

James writes of these rich, unbelieving Jews in the same manner that the Lord Jesus spoke of the scribes and Pharisees in Matt 23.

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

Go to now: (Cp Jam 4:13). Between these two sections concerning warnings to those who place confidence on wealth is Jam 4:17. The High Priest and his family were a perfect example of the warning of that verse. They knew what was right (cp John 9:39-41; 15:22,24; Acts 4:5-21) yet didn't do it, therefore judgement was to come upon them. This also gives a warning to those who don't think that the principle of Jam 4:17 is important.



Ye rich men: Riches themselves are not wrong, it all depends on how they are used. Riches are actually a blessing from God in the first place (Deut 8:12-14; 32:15), and this fact needs to be recognised in the believer's life (Jer 9:23-24) and manifested in the using of this blessing with godly wisdom (1 Tim 6:17-19). However, riches are fleeting, and don't last forever (Prov 23:4-5; Ecc 5:13-14; Jer 17:11). Those who choose to put their trust in riches have their portion in this life (Psa 17:14) and face the consequence of that decision in death (Psa 49:6-20; Prov 11:4,28) and the absence of the hope of everlasting life in the Kingdom Age (Matt 19:24; 1 Tim 6:9-10). This second group is the one that James addresses now. Thus, not all rich are included in this condemnation, only those who are unjust and oppressive.

Weep: *klaio* (2799) - (cp Luke 6:24-25). The same word is used in Jam 4:9. (See also vs 1-5 with Joel 1:3-7 - they had failed to learn from the poor example of their forefathers).

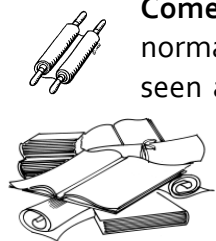
Howl: *ololuzo* (3649). This is the only occurrence of this word in the New Testament, but it is used in the LXX in Isa 13:6; 14:31 and 15:3. In each case the context is of impending Divine judgement. Judgement upon the rich of James' time was to come in AD 70 (cp Mark 12:9). A similar judgement has come upon many of the rich in today's world - shown in the current economic problems. No doubt this is but a taste of the judgement that will come upon the whole world in the day of Armageddon.



Thought to think about and do

How important are our riches to us? What focus do we put on building up our wealth in our lives? Does knowing the fact that Christ's return is imminent and that our temporal riches are about to fade actually change our view of life and subsequent actions, or would we weep and howl also if our worldly treasures were taken away from us?

Miseries: *talaiporia* (5004) - This is the same word as "afflicted" in Jam 4:9. There is a message here for the believers as well. It is better to humble ourselves now than to be exposed at the judgement seat (cp 1 Cor 11:31-32).



Come upon: *eperchomai* (1904) - "are coming upon you" (RSV). The rich do not normally experience miseries but these were very imminent. The wealthy Jews were seen as desirable prey for their seditious fellow-countrymen during the period of the sieges before AD 70 (see Josephus' War of the Jews Book V, Chapter X, Paragraph 2), and for the marauding Romans during and after AD 70. They had little opportunity left in which to forsake Judaism and accept the Law of Liberty (see Acts 2:39-40).

The judgement was so imminent that James continues as if it has already happened.

Verse 2: Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten.

In Eastern countries gold, silver and clothing are regarded as a person's wealth (cp Acts 20:33; Matt 6:19-20).

Corrupted: *sepoiy* (4595) - putrefying, perishing. James is using graphic language to emphasise his point.

Motheaten: *setobrotos* (4598). This happens when the garments are held too long (either through a lack of use or not being able to find buyers). See also Job 13:28. For an application of the destruction of those who persecute Messiah, see Isa 50:9; 51:6-8.

Here is a reminder of how temporary "goodly raiment" is (see Jam 2:2).

Verse 3: Your gold and silver is cankered and the rust of them shall be a witness against you,

Cankered: *katioo* (2728) - to poison, rust down, corrode. This word comes from the same word as "poison" used in Jam 3:8 and "rust" used later in this verse. As poison destroys living tissues in a human body, so rust eats into and destroys metal. In both cases, its value or functionality is impaired. In a human body, poison can lead to death; in metal, rust can lead to corrosion and worthlessness. Gold and silver do not properly rust or oxidise like iron and steel, but will discolour and become tarnished if long stored without use or kept in a damp place. James however is emphasising his point. The Jews thought that their riches would last forever. However, when judgement came upon them, their riches lost their value and power to give enjoyment to them, because they were the ones who were the target of attack for the wealth they possessed (cp Matt 16:26). These rich Jews were in danger of losing not just their riches but also their lives in AD 70, as this verse goes on to say.

Rust: *ios* (2447) - poison (of animals), rust.

Witness: *maturion* (3142) - a declaration of facts.

The rusty riches were a sign of their own corrupt condition. Money is worthless unless it is used, and when tarnished, is a testament to the fact that it has been hoarded. The wealth stored up could have been used for others who were in need (cp Jam 2:15-16). Miserly attitudes and indifference to the needs of others will be a witness against us in the day of judgement.

and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.

For these rich Jews, their life (flesh) really did consist in the abundance of the things which they possessed (cp Luke 12:15). The poison of selfishness spreads through a person until it destroys him totally. Likewise the judgement on the Jews in AD 70 affected their very lives in a most painful way. The focus of their life was forcibly taken away from them and didn't provide them



with the happiness they sought. Fire is a well known symbol for Divine Judgement (cp Psa 21:9; Isa 10:16-17; Amos 5:6; 1 Cor 3:13; 2 Thess 1:8), and no other figure could more effectively suggest the swiftness and sureness with which they and all they had were to be consumed. Many died through the literal fire that swept through Jerusalem. The idea of eating flesh is also a symbol of judgement (cp Rev 17:16; 19:18).

Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

Heaped treasure: *thesauri* (2343).



Last days: "In the last days" (RV). A term always referring to some completion of God's purpose in the earth, or to the era proceeding that completion. Here it refers to the last days of Judah's commonwealth.



Heb 1:1-2; Jude 18; see also 1 John 2:18; 1 Cor 10:11; Heb 9:26; 1 Pet 1:20.

Not only had they stored up for themselves the wrong treasure (cp Matt 6:19-20; Prov 11:4; Zeph 1:18; Rom 2:5) but it was also in the time just prior to the judgement that they had been warned about (Deut 28:47-57; Jer 19:9; Mic 3:1-12; Matt 24:15-22; Luke 21:20-24; cp 2 Pet 3:3,7,10,12).



Is this warning relevant for us in the present affluent society? What should be our true perspective in life? (See 1 Tim 6:5-11; Psa 73:1-19).

The wealthy Jews had sinned against God in not believing His Word. This naturally led to disregarding the needs of their fellow men. Having denounced them for hoarding wealth in a crucial era of the world's history, James now indicts them for specific evils of which they were guilty. Three charges are laid against them -

- exploiting their fellow man (vs 4),
- engaging in riotous living (vs 5),
- condemning and causing the death of the righteous (vs 6).

Verse 4: Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth:

Behold: James invites the believers to consider the reasons for the judgement which was to come upon the rich.

Hire: *misthos* (3408) - wages.

Labourers: *ergates* (2040). These were the ones who were supplying the work to increase the rich men's wealth.

Kept back by fraud: *apo stereo* (650). This was condemned by the Law and the prophets (Lev 19:13; cp Jer 22:13; Mal 3:5). Note that this Law is in the context of the Royal Law (Jam 2:8; Lev 19:18).

Crieth: *krazo* (2896) - to cry out as a raven, to utter an inarticulate cry from fear, pain or some other emotion. Compare the blood of Abel (Gen 4:10). Cain's worship was not acceptable, but Abel's was, so Cain persecuted the righteous (cp Heb 11:4 with vs 6).

Normally it would be the labourers that cry to God (cp Deut 24:14-15 - this is a restatement of Lev 19:13 with additional words), but here the wages themselves witness against the rich (see vs 3). The money they were hoarding didn't even belong to them and was needed by the poorer class (there is a principle here for us within the Ecclesia as well). The money kept back was the livelihood of the labourers.

and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

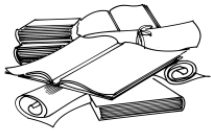
Cries: *boao* (994) - to shout (for help or in a tumultuous way). God's ears are always open to the cry of his people (John 9:31), and will judge or deliver accordingly in the role of Yahweh Sabaoth. This has been seen in the life of Abel (Gen 4:10-11), the nation of Israel in Egypt (Exo 2:23; 3:7-9), in the wilderness (Exo 22:22-24,27), in the days of Isaiah (Isa 5:5-9) and will be seen also in the time of Armageddon (Zech 13:9; cp Psa 50:15; 81:7). This verse gives us encouragement, as from it we are reminded that God's ears are always open to our petition, and that we can rely on Him to see that justice is done.



Thought to think about and do

Do we pray to our Father for help when in trial, or do we rely on our own strength to get us through? (Compare vs 13-16).

Sabaoth: *sabaoth* (4519) - armies. The militant title of Deity. It only appears elsewhere in the New Testament in Rom 9:29. It is untranslated from the Hebrew to give force to James' words (cp Mal 3:5).



See *Phanerosis* Pg 17-19 (Centenary Edition).

The cries are to the armies of God who will bring about vengeance in the time of AD 70 (cp Matt 22:6-7). This is a warning to the rich but an encouragement to the poor that their cries are heard (cp Luke 18:7). It is the persecuted believers who will act as Yahweh Sabaoth to bring vengeance upon the world at the establishment of God's Kingdom (see Rev 19:11-15; Psa 149:5-9; cp Isa 9:7).

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



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

Lived in pleasure: *truphao* (5171) - to live delicately, luxuriously, at ease. They were dead while they lived (1 Tim 5:6), like Sardis (Rev 3:1), living deliciously (Rev 18:3,7,9), like Jezebel (1 Kings 21:7).

Wanton: *spatalao* (4684) - to live riotously.

Instead of helping those in need, they had spent their wealth on their own excesses (see Isa 5:11-12; 56:12; Amos 6:1,4-6).

Nourished: *trepho* (5142) - to fatten, pamper.

Slaughter: *sphage* (4967) - (cp Acts 8:32; Psa 44:22). Judgement was coming upon a people who were full with their own fatness, as it had done before (Isa 34:1-10).

Their heart's desires were being satisfied, while ignorant that they were fattening themselves like sheep for the slaughter of AD 70 (cp Jer 12:1-3). A similar slaughter of the rich, godless nations, including Israel, will take place at Armageddon (Jer 25:15-38; Eze 39:17-29).

Verse 6: Ye have condemned *and* killed the just;

Condemned: *katadikazo* (2613) - to adjudge against, sentence, pronounce guilty. "This word signifies to exercise right or Law against anyone" (Vine). (Compare Matt 12:2,7,37; Luke 6:37).

Killed: *phoneuo* (5407) - to murder.



Just: *dikaios* (1342). "The righteous one" (Diag), "The righteous man" (RSV). (Compare Acts 22:14; 1 John 2:1).

The primary reference is of course to the Lord Jesus Christ who was falsely accused, misjudged (Mark 14:64; Matt 27:24) and murdered by the Jews (Acts 3:13-15; 7:52). That same hostility is manifested to Christ's body (cp 1 Thess 2:14-16; John 15:18-20; Jam 2:6), yet for this, judgement was soon to come (Matt 23:29-39).

and he doth not resist you.

Resist: *antitassomai* (498). The unbelieving Jews could not understand this. Who ever heard of a Jew who did not resist? (Consider the number of faction groups in existence during the destruction of Jerusalem).

The wording here also points to Christ. The one who was killed is spoken of as alive and has the power to resist. The mercy of God was shown in delaying the judgement upon the nation until all those with ears to hear had accepted the Gospel (cp 2 Pet 3:7-13). We are likewise exhorted not to resist (cp Matt 5:39; 1 Thess 5:15). God will resist the proud (Jam 4:6). Christ gave us an example of patiently waiting for the judgement of God to come (cp 1 Pet 2:21-23). (See also Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30; Prov 20:22).

This verse could also be alluding to Stephen, a righteous man (Acts 6:3,5,8,10,15), who was condemned (Acts 6:11-14) and murdered (Acts 7:57-60) cruelly and unjustly by the rich Jews, and yet who didn't resist his murderers (Acts 7:59-60).

James "the Just" himself suffered a violent death at the hands of the Jews and gave an example to the believers of not resisting. In doing so, he showed that he was a true "doer of the Word" that he was asking others to follow.

Interestingly, all three men died with a similar expression of compliance on their lips - "Forgive them, for they know not what they do" - Christ (Luke 23:34), Stephen (Acts 7:59-60) and James (Josephus).

The Ecclesia of Smyrna was likewise being condemned and killed by the authorities. Yet Christ asks them not to resist, but to follow his example and be faithful unto death, with the reward of eternal life at the coming of their Lord if they patiently endured (cp vs 6-11 with Rev 2:10-11).



5:7-11 - Reward to come to patient

With Christ's example of non-resistance before them, James now turns to the brethren and gives them encouragement to help them in their time of persecution. Patience can be displayed when the end is focused upon (see Jam 1:2-4,12).

Verse 7: Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.

Patient: *makrothumeo* (3114) - longsuffering, forbearing (from the root words "makros" (3117) - long, and "thumos" - passion (fierceness, wrath), a sudden outburst from inward indignation). "It is that quality of self restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger" (Vine). James emphasises this quality referring to it again later in this verse as well as in vs 8,10.

Longsuffering is one of the qualities that characterises God's attitude to mankind (Exo 34:6; Luke 18:7; Rom 2:4; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 3:9,15). It was perfectly shown forth in His Son (1 Tim 1:16) and also shown in other men in Scripture such as Abraham (Heb 6:15) and Paul (2 Tim 3:10). James now exhorts the brethren to exhibit this characteristic also (cp also 1 Cor 13:4; Gal 5:22; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 5:14; Heb 6:15).

Therefore: *oun* (3767). This word marks the continuity of thought from the preceding verses. Their lack of retaliation against their oppressors is backed up by an exhortation to maintain their patience unto the coming of the Lord.

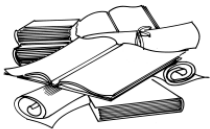
Coming: *parousia* (3952) - presence (as opposed to absence). The word also denotes a visit from a King, Emperor or other person in authority. The coming, therefore, of the Lord, can mean his presence in his official capacity or authority as King.

When the disciples asked Christ concerning the sign of his coming (Matt 24:3), they didn't refer to his return from heaven because they thought the Kingdom of God was about to be set up with Christ as King (Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6). They asked what sign would show his elevation to and manifestation as King, to which the Lord gave two occasions: one in the first century when the Roman army marched against Jerusalem (Matt 24:27,37,39), and the other in his final coming in Armageddon (Matt 24:30). The coming of this verse was to be initially manifested in the Roman army who unknowingly were to act under the control of Christ as his representatives (cp Matt 21:40-41; 22:7). Here then in AD 70, was the manifestation of Christ's power as King - a title he gained after his resurrection (cp Matt 28:18; Acts 2:32-36; 17:7; Eph 1:20-23; Phil 2:9-11; 1 Pet 3:22; Rev 17:14; 19:16).

James' exhortation was a real comfort to the brethren, as after AD 70, the opposition of the rich, oppressive Jews towards the believers was significantly relieved.



We live in the days of the final coming of Christ. Compare and contrast the two signs that Christ gave in Matt 24 using the above information and your knowledge of the events that took and will take place.



See *The Last Days of Judah's Commonwealth* by Bro Thomas.

AD 70 was a fulfilment of the days of vengeance (cp Luke 21:22), and as such, were days of retribution upon those who had killed the Just One, and his followers (cp Dan 9:26; Matt 22:4-7; 1 Thess 2:14-16).

The things James lists against the rich Jews (vs 1-6) were a constant reminder to God of the plight of His chosen people. As such, the believers could be patient knowing that God would avenge His elect.



What are the things that remind God of our plight in the world? Are they the same as in James' time? How can we gain comfort from them?

James next gives an example from everyday life to encourage them.

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.

Behold: *idou* (2400). James wants his readers to pay attention to this section (cp vs 9,11).

Husbandman: *georgos* (1092) - a tiller of the ground, a farmer.



Waiteth: *ekdechomai* (1551) - to wait expectantly. "It suggests a reaching out in readiness to receive something" (Vine).



Psa 130:5-6; Lam 3:25-26; Mic 7:7.

Precious: *timios* (5093) - accounted as of great price, held in honour, esteemed, very dear.

Fruit: *karpos* (2590) - (cp Jam 3:17-18).

Early and latter rain: The rain was provided by God (Jer 5:24; Hos 6:3), and was an evidence of Divine goodness (cp Deut 11:13-14; Ruth 1:1,6). In Israel, there is considerable rain during the winter months, but these rains are considered relatively unimportant compared to the early and latter rains. All winter is the rainy season (Cant 2:11), and by the middle of April (the end of Nisan), the winter rains are all over.

The early, or former rains occur at the end of summer - in October (Ethanim). They are only for a day or several days duration, but are heavy, and essential for the land - to soak the parched and cracked earth and to break up the soil in order to facilitate ploughing and sowing and the rest of the agricultural process.

The latter rains occur at the start of spring - during March-April (Nisan). They come just before the long summer drought, and are essential for the land - in the filling out of the grain just before harvest (Lev 26:3-4).

The farmer must wait patiently for the sun and rain to work with his seed to bring forth the crop. He has no control over the natural elements just as we have no control over the Divine plan. The grain was planted and the farmer had to wait until the winter was over before the first harvest was reaped. But he waits in confident anticipation that the fruits will come (cp Psa 126:5-6; Isa 61:11) as a result of the watering of the ground that God has provided (Jam 1:17-18; Isa 55:10-13). If the husbandman shows this much patience for crops which perish, how much more should we be long suffering as we wait for the crown of life?

God is also a husbandman and is patiently tending the branches of His vine to bring forth fruit (cp John 15:1-8).

In Joel 2:23, both former and latter rains are used in relation to the first and second advents of the Lord Jesus Christ. The former rain was "a teacher of righteousness" who came moderately - "according to righteousness". His work, which included the outpouring of the former rains of the Holy Spirit (cp Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:4,16-21), ploughed and sowed the dry ground - the minds of the hearers - with the gospel seed of Truth, that the Truth could be spread into the entire world.

Like James and his brethren, we still await the second advent of Christ and the outpouring of the latter rains of the Holy Spirit prior to the day of the reaping of the harvest of the earth (cp Psa 72:1,6,16). This will be a time of much joy (cp Job 29:23), and one that we should be earnestly praying for (cp Zech 10:1,4).

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

Stablish: *sterizo* (4741) - to set fast, to turn resolutely.

Draweth nigh: *eggizo* (1448) - to make near, approach. The same word is used in the phrase "the Kingdom of God *is at hand*" (cp Matt 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15. See also 1 Pet 4:7). Just as Christ represented the Kingdom at his first appearance (cp Matt 3:2 (Diag); 12:28) so did the Roman armies represent Christ in AD 70. The warning in the next verse that Christ will judge our reactions in times of trial is also a reason for remaining steadfast to the end.



Likewise we should show the same patience and have our faith stablished in our hearts in the knowledge that Christ's return "has approached" (Diag). (Compare 2 Thess 3:5; 1 Thess 3:11-13).

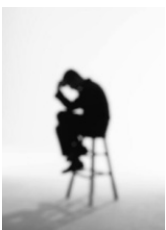
Stablishing our hearts involves conducting ourselves appropriately towards our brethren as well as patiently enduring the suffering from unbelievers.

Verse 9: Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned:

Grudge: *stenazo* (4727) - to sigh, murmur, groan, grieve. "To sigh or groan within ourselves" (Grimm-Thayer). "To groan (of an inward, unexpressed feeling of sorrow)" (Vine).



Mark 7:34; Acts 7:34; Rom 8:22-23,26; 2 Cor 5:2,4; Heb 13:17.



James is warning his readers not to hold grievances concerning things that other brethren may have done to us. It can easily happen that we are patient with what the world does to us, but we store pent up feelings inside about what those in the Ecclesia might have done. We need to remember that God is working with all of us, developing our characters to be like His own. Patience is required with each other. We should be encouraging others with the end result of our calling (cp vs 11). James later exhorts us to speak to others if we have any problems (vs 16).

Condemned: *katakrimo* (2632) - to judge against, sentence (cp Jam 4:11-12).

It would be tragic to withstand the persecutions from unbelievers only to be condemned by our attitude towards our brethren (cp Matt 7:1-5).



behold, the judge standeth before the door.



Roth: "Lo! the judge before the door is standing".



In grieving against others, we set ourselves up as judges (cp Jam 4:11-12), when in effect the true judge is at the door, and is listening for our response (cp Rev 3:20; John 10:2-3).

James next gives two strong examples to look to - the prophets for patience in affliction and Job for endurance in trial. Both examples suffered in the hands of their "brethren".

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



Diag: "As an example of suffering evil and of patience, my brethren, take the prophets".



Name: *anoma* (3686) - (cp Jer 20:7-9; 26:16; Isa 39:8; Hos 12:10).

One of the greatest of Old Testament Prophets was the man Malachi. His name means "My Messenger" (Mal 1:1; 3:1), and as such, his words were always "in the Name of the Lord". His plea to the nation of Israel bears a marked similarity to the words of James, perhaps indicating that James draws from, and alludes to the words of Malachi, not just in this verse, but throughout the rest of his Epistle. See the chart below.

JAMES	MALACHI
1:17 - No variableness.	3:6 - I am the Lord, I change not.
1:27 - The fatherless and the widows in their affliction.	3:5 - The widow and the fatherless.
4:4 - Adulterers.	3:5 - Adulterers.
4:8 - Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.	3:7 - Return unto me, and I will return unto you.
5:1 - Weep and howl.	2:13 - Tears, weeping, crying out.
5:3 - Your gold and silver is cankered.	3:3 - Purge them as gold and silver.
5:3 - A witness against you.	3:5 - A swift witness against.
5:3 - Eat your flesh as it were fire.	3:2; 4:1 - Like a refiner's fire... Shall burn them up.
5:4 - The hire of the labourers...kept back by fraud.	3:5 - Those that oppress the hireling in his wages.
5:4 - The Lord of Sabaoth.	3:7 - Saith the Lord of Hosts.
5:8,9 - The coming of the Lord draweth nigh... The judge standeth before the door.	3:1;4:1-2 - The Lord...shall suddenly come to his Temple... The day cometh... The sun of righteousness (shall) arise.

Example: *hupodeigma* (5262) - pattern, an example for imitation. The example of the prophets that they were to take was in the context of vs 4-6.

Suffering affliction: *kakopatheia* (2552) - hardship.

Patience: *makrothumia* (3115) - longsuffering. We need to manifest the same patience with our brethren as with the world (cp vs 7-8).

Even the prophets who had the authority of God experienced opposition from others of the "Ecclesia" (cp Matt 5:11-12; 23:29-37; 2 Chron 36:15-16; Jer 2:30; Acts 7:52; 1 Thess 2:14-15). Patience and suffering has always been the lot of God's servants as it is the way He develops character (see notes on Jam 1:2-4). The prophets provide us with a wonderful example by the manner in which they endured suffering (cp Heb 11:32-38), trusting in Yahweh's defence (cp Jer 1:17-19).



Look up examples of prophets who showed these qualities. What is it that will help us to develop the same outlook and stamina?

Verse 11: Behold, we count them happy which endure.

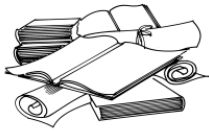


Endure: *hupomeno* (5278) - (cp Matt 10:22; see Matt 5:10-12).

James is recalling his words from chapter 1:2-4,12. Those who endure are blessed because they will receive the joy they held before them (cp Heb 12:2; see Dan 12:12-13).

Ye have heard of the patience of Job,

Patience: *hupomone* (5281) - endurance, constancy. "Patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency" (Vine).

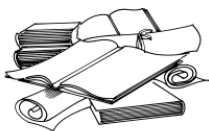


"Job provides an outstanding example of patience in suffering. See Job 1:21. His experiences also reveal the purpose of suffering. Job's three friends were dominated by a false theory that a person's sins or otherwise, were invariably measured by the extent of his sufferings. Job suffered greatly, hence Job must have been a most evil sinner. The fact that his friends could not pin-point his sins availed nought. In fact it served to show that he was hypocritical in his assumed righteousness! Job, on his part, refuted the theory, for he knew that it was wrong. He recognised that his sufferings were from God, but he could not understand their purpose, for he endeavoured, in every way possible, to live in accordance with the Divine will. His sufferings were not necessary for the purification of his character, in spite of the allegations of his associates, for Yahweh gave testimony to his righteousness (Job 1:1,8). In view of their claims to the contrary, he felt completely frustrated until the revelation of Yahweh placed all matters in proper perspective. Then it was revealed that his example of steadfast endurance in the face of bitter trial and prolonged provocation was not in vain. He suffered, not merely for himself, but like Christ, for the benefit of his friends. They became convinced of their mistake, and Job who was vindicated by Yahweh, presided as a priest in their sacrifices of atonement (Job 42:7-9)" (*Expositor - From James to Jude, Pg 76-77*).

Job was granted a fuller understanding of the Divine purpose through his suffering.

and have seen the end of the Lord;

End: *telos* (5056) - the result or conclusion of an act or state.



"Job's example not only shows the extent of trial that a man of faith is capable of enduring but also reveals the goodness of Yahweh. Job was blessed with greater prosperity in his latter end than he enjoyed before his sufferings came upon him, and had the added joy of being completely united in fellowship with his friends. Therefore, both he and his friends benefited from his sufferings, as both Christ and his friends benefit from his. That is the basic lesson of the book of Job. It shows that sufferings in the Lord are not in vain. They can help perfect the characters of those who suffer, and, in addition, provide an example of fortitude and faith that can stimulate others to do likewise. The statement "the end of the Lord" denotes the latter end to which Yahweh brought Job (cp Job 42:12). It implies that the patriarch's ultimate elevation was designed by Yahweh from the beginning. The word "end" is from the Greek "*telos*" and denotes the completion of a process. This is seen in the perfection of Job's character, and the greater blessings he received in his final prosperity (cp Job 42:10-17). If we are called upon to suffer for the Truth's sake, we can be assured that there are great things in store for us if we endure faithfully to the end (cp Rom 8:18). Yahweh has predetermined a great destiny for those who are obedient to His will (Eph 1:5-6)" (*Expositor - From James to Jude, Pg 77*).

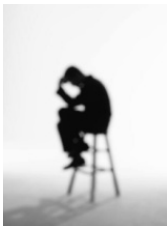
that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Pitiful: *polusplagchnos* (4184) - extremely compassionate (from *splagchnon* (4698) - bowels (as the seat of most tender affection)).

Tender mercy: *oiktirmon* (3629) - to exercise pity, compassion for the ills of others (cp Luke 6:36).

The first expression shows that God is very compassionate towards His people (Isa 63:7-9) and the second shows that it is part of His character (Exo 34:6-7). As such He will help His children in their affliction (see Neh 9:31; Psa 51:1; 103:8-9; Dan 9:18-19; 1 Chron 21:13; Luke 1:77-79; 2 Cor 1:3). A wise parent will discipline his children but will always be willing to extend compassion and mercy as well (cp Luke 15:20-24). We too need to learn to develop these qualities (cp Phil 2:1; Col 3:12).

Job's blessing was not primarily because of his endurance (or his righteousness), but because of God's compassion.



If we haven't already, we are bound to have times in our life when the end of the Lord seems impossibly far away. James is exhorting us in those times to do two things: (1) endure - do not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial, and (2) remember that our God is caring for us and is always full of love and compassion towards us. Doing these two things will help us through every difficult moment in our life, however, the example of Job shows that we are ultimately dependent on our Father's compassion towards us, and humility is needed to realise this.



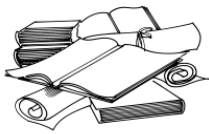
5:12 - AVOIDANCE OF OATHS

James has encouraged us to be patient in our afflictions in the hope of ultimate vindication, and has warned against holding grudges against the brethren. Now, in a continuation of and climax to the main theme of James 3, he exhorts us to avoid expressing our feelings of impatience in oaths that would blaspheme God.

Verse 12: But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath:



Rotherham emphasises the phrase "Above all things". James wants us to note this point. "All things" in the context are patience (vs 7) and grudging not (vs 9). Holding grudges breaks the second greatest commandment but losing our patience and making irresponsible oaths in God's name breaks the first commandment (cp Matt 22:34-40) and misuses the name that we have been called to.



"James was writing of the half-involuntary oath that comes so readily and volubly from the unguarded lips of the man for whom God's name is rather the ally of his passion than the object of his awe - especially when he is living under strain or duress" (Neville Smart - *The Epistle of James*, Pg 177).

Swear: *omnuo* (3660). The eastern people are particularly prone to the excessive giving of oaths.

Heaven ... earth: The Jews thought that by swearing by part of God's creation and not using God's name (cp Matt 5:33-37) they could circumvent the responsibilities attached to swearing by God's name (cp Deut 6:13; 10:20; Lev 19:12). But Christ showed that the creation cannot be separated from God. The heaven and earth are God's throne and footstool (cp Matt 5:33-37; 23:16-22; Isa 66:1).

Oath: *horkos* (3727) - a fence, an enclosure, a restriction, that which restrains a person.



Under the Law, there were a variety of oaths. There were three judicial oaths:

- (1) The word of adjuration (Lev 5:1), used in Matt 26:63.
- (2) When property held in trust for another was either lost or damaged (Exo 22:11).
- (3) The compulsory oath of a woman accused of infidelity (Num 5:19-21).

There were also covenant oaths (Lev 19:11-12) and voluntary oaths to God (Num 30:2).

James is chiefly referring to the last of these - our voluntary oaths to God.

This language is almost identical to Christ's (cp Matt 5:33-37) yet James is applying it under different circumstances. Christ used it in the background of oaths under the Mosaic Law. James is writing about the involuntary oaths made under times of stress and impatience. We must not let provocation or our emotions take control of our actions and make rash or irresponsible statements with our tongue that we don't mean or can't keep (cp Deut 23:21-23; Ecc 5:2-6; contrast Psa 15:4). On the other hand, God has sworn with oaths to emphasise that His Word will be kept (cp Acts 2:30; Heb 6:13,16-18; 7:21).

but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay;

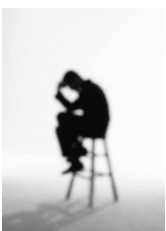


Clear simple language should be the medium for expressing our feelings, not theatrical attention grabbing displays (cp Jam 1:19-20). Our lives should be conducted in such a way that we are trustworthy and oaths are not necessary, as is the case under the perfect Law of Liberty (Jam 2:12), especially as oaths bind us to a commitment we may not be able to keep (Jam 4:13-15). James shows us in the next verses a deeper and more satisfying way to soothe our frustrated and ailing spirits.

lest ye fall into condemnation.

Condemnation: *krisis* (2920) - a separating, then a decision.

The promise was that judgement would come upon their persecutors (vs 1-6). We must take care lest our words cause us also to be judged against (cp Matt 12:36-37. Compare the example of Peter - Matt 26:69-75).



The use of correct speech under pressure and provocation is important. Do we find this difficult to do? How can we ensure that we do not make rash statements in these situations?



5:13-18 - SICKNESS AND HEALING; POWER OF PRAYER

Emotions within must be released somehow. James now selects the two worst instances that could result in unwise speaking - the heavy laden and the light-hearted. He shows us the truly satisfying expression of our feelings (both sorrowful and joyful) while at the same time addressing the problems of sickness.

James began his letter with encouragement to count it all joy when we undergo trial. We cannot do this alone. We need to seek the help of others. James now directs our minds to the great power available in prayer, which has benefits both for those who are praying as well as those who are being prayed for.



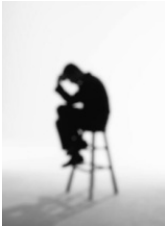
James refers to prayer several times in his Epistle. List the things he writes and group them into things to do and things we shouldn't do.

Verse 13: Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.

Among you: That is among the Ecclesia. Prayer for spiritual and physical strength to overcome hardships is only available to those who have a relationship with God. It is a privilege we need to appreciate that the world doesn't have.

Afflicted: *kakopatheo* (2553) - to undergo hardship (cp vs 10; 2 Tim 2:3; 4:5). We will suffer if we want to be in the Kingdom (see Acts 14:22; 2 Tim 3:12).

Pray: *proseuchomai* (4336) - to pray towards (God), (from *euchomai* - to wish) (cp vs 14-18).



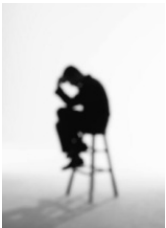
Unfortunately, prayer is not used to overcome hardships as often as it could be. Through prayer we can share our burdens with one who is able to help us through our trials (cp 2 Chron 33:12-13). This is much more productive than holding grudges within ourselves (vs 9; cp Rom 8:26). Compare the attitudes of Job (Job 1:20-21), Jonah (Jon 2:1-7), Christ (Luke 22:44; Heb 5:7) and Paul (2 Cor 12:7-10). (See also Psa 18:6; 50:15; 91:15; 107:6,13,28; 116:3-5; 118:5; 142:1-7).

Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

Merry: *euthumeo* (2114) - to be cheerful (cp Acts 27:22,36).

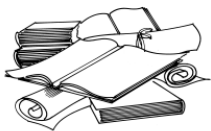


Sing psalms: *psallo* (5567) - "sing praise" (RSV). (See also 1 Chron 16:8-9).



When we are happy, it is natural to express our joy through music. Our joyfulness should be directed towards God through praise and thanksgiving because it is He who provides us with relief. Hymns and psalms are a means to express our hearts to God (cp Eph 5:19-20; Col 3:16; Acts 16:23-25; Psa 95:1-2; 105:1-2). Singing in this way will remind us of that one who gives all good and perfect gifts (cp Jam 1:17) and will prevent us from participating in the less wholesome merriment of this world (cp Jam 5:5).

To James, even the smallest things of life (sadness and joy) have spiritual significance and can be used to glorify God.



"Whether sorrow or joy be our lot, then its truest and finest outlet is worship"
(Neville Smart - *The Epistle of James*, Pg 180).



Thought to think about and do

How often do we turn to God when we have problems or thank him when things are going well for us?

The effects of trials can take a toll on us. We can become sick both physically and spiritually. Prayer will minimise the effect of affliction and singing will restrain the excess of merriment - both go a long way to overcoming weaknesses but sometimes due to the burdens of trials it is necessary to seek additional strength. James provides the cure to overcome weakness.

There were some believers who James was writing to who were physically sick. In the rest of his Epistle James uses this opportunity to deal with spiritual sickness, basing his advice on the cure for natural sickness (first the natural, then the spiritual - cp 1 Cor 15:46).



- The context of the section is the forgiveness of sins (vs 15,16,20).
- James uses the word "save" in the spiritual sense throughout his Epistle (see vs 15,20).
- The words he has chosen have both physical and spiritual uses (sick vs 14, healed vs 16).
- Elijah's example is one of a righteous man who prayed for the physical healing of the land, but also the spiritual healing of his people.

Verse 14: Is any sick among you?

Sick: *astheneo* (770) - to be feeble, without strength. This word is used of both physical sickness (cp Matt 10:8; Mark 6:56; Luke 4:40; John 4:46; Phil 2:26-27) and spiritual weakness through lack of faith (cp Rom 4:19; 5:6; 14:1-2, 21; 1 Cor 8:7-12; 9:22).

let him call for the elders of the Ecclesia;

Let him: This requires humility to acknowledge that he is sick and that he will submit to God's way. The desire for God's help must come from the sick first for the prayer to be effective.

Elders: *presbuteros* (4245) - advanced in years, a senior (cp Luke 15:25; John 8:9; 1 Tim 5:1-2).

ELDERS

The Ecclesia had two main offices of administration - apostles and elders (cp Acts 15:2,4,6,22-23; 16:4). This term was also used of classes of mature men such as the Sanhedrin (cp Luke 22:66; Acts 22:5) and appointed overseers of the Ecclesia (cp Acts 14:23; 1 Tim 5:17).

The elders were also known as Bishops or Overseers (*episkopos* (1985) - superintendent. Cp Acts 20:17,28; Tit 1:5,7). "*Presbuteros* refers to their dignity, *Episkopos* to their function" (Grimm-Thayer).

The duty of the elders was to care for the ecclesial members in all their needs (cp Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:5; 5:17; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:1-3). For their qualifications see 1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9.

The elders are to help in meekness knowing that they are also subject to the same weaknesses (cp Gal 6:1).

Those who feel their weakness are instructed to seek the help of the elders. Often they are too proud to go to those who can help and this can lead to brethren leaving the Truth. We don't go to a doctor to fix our car, or a mechanic to have our teeth checked - we go to where we know we will get proper help. The attributes of the elders qualify them to help the spiritually weak - only those spiritually minded can understand the problem and give the correct solution (cp Rom 8:5). James does not say to go to those who are suffering the same problems and are unable to overcome them themselves. We may get sympathy but we won't get solutions. We will only get strength from those who are positive examples. The faith and examples of more experienced brethren can fortify us against the pressures of this life (see Phil 3:17; 1 Cor 11:1; Heb 13:7).



Who are the people we turn to for help when we need it? What are the characteristics of those people? Are they able to uplift us in the things of God?

and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil

Pray: *proseuchomai* (4336) - (cp Acts 9:40; 28:8; 1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:33). "Pray over him" could also be rendered "pray with hands extended over him" (Grimm-Thayer). James has in mind the practice of healing that was used by Christ and the apostles as a witness to the power of the Gospel to save. Christ would often lay his hands upon the sick that he healed (cp Mark 5:23; 6:5; Luke 4:40; 13:13) as did the apostles (cp Mark 16:18; Acts 28:8).

Anointing: *aleipho* (218) - to oil, "a general term used for an anointing of any kind" (Vine).

Oil: *elaion* (1637) - olive oil. Oil was sometimes used in the healing process (cp Isa 1:6; Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34). The modern equivalent would be to pray and call a doctor. Oil was used as a symbol of nourishment and comfort (Deut 32:13; 33:24; Job 29:6; Psa 45:7; 109:18; Isa 61:3).

Oil was also used in the restoration and purification of a leper (cp Lev 14:9-18). On the seventh day he would shave off all his hair (vs 9) making himself like a new baby. Then on the eighth day (vs 10 - the day of new beginnings, and of circumcision (the making of a covenant)) the priest would sprinkle blood and oil on the man's right ear, right thumb and right toe (vs 14-17) signifying the identification of the man's hearing, actions and walk with Christ's sacrifice and the Word of God. In addition the rest of the oil would be poured on the man's head (signifying his thoughts) (vs 18).

The power was not the action of anointing with oil but in the symbolic meaning (hence James writes that it should be done "in the name of the Lord"). The prayer (and the laying on of hands) was an identification with the sufferer and the united seeking of help and guidance from the Father. The oil symbolised the Word of God, which is the source of that guidance (cp Psa 119:105,130; Matt 25:3-4), and the anointing thereof symbolised the coming to a knowledge of the Truth (1 John 2:27). The faith that is needed in prayer (vs 15), comes from the Word (Rom 10:17), and so when prayer and the Word are combined we have a powerful source of strength to overcome weakness. It is useful for us to remember the power of these ingredients when facing personal trial.



Communal Prayer: Communal prayer with those of strong faith and example can sometimes be appropriate for those who do not have the strength of faith in themselves to overcome their trials. Knowing that others are seeking our wellbeing can also give us the encouragement we need. Combined with sound advice based on God's Word, this provides a formidable strength against the future trials.

in the name of the Lord:



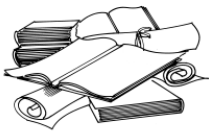
All of our actions should be consistent with our calling "in the name of the Lord". What do these references say about what our way of life should be "in the name of the Lord"?

- Matt 10:22; 24:29
- Mark 16:17-18; Acts 3:6; 4:10
- John 14:13-14
- Acts 2:21
- Acts 2:38
- Acts 3:16
- Acts 4:17-18; 9:29
- Acts 5:41; 1 Pet 4:14
- Acts 9:21; 15:26; 21:13
- Eph 5:20
- Col 3:17
- Jam 5:10
- Rev 2:13; 3:8
- Rev 14:1

It is only through Christ that we are able to be saved (cp 1 Tim 2:4-5; Acts 4:12). It is not the strength of the elders themselves that will help the weak but the strength they derive from Christ (cp Phil 4:13; 2 Cor 12:9). This emphasises the importance of baptism so that we can become "in the name of the Lord".



From the information and our work above, what does it mean to live our lives "in the name of the Lord"? How should it affect the way we interact with each other, conduct ourselves at school or work, or spend our leisure time?



'It was not uncommon, then, for acts of miraculous healing to be accomplished in New Testament times by the laying on of hands and by anointing with oil; the latter of these practices, and probably the former too, James enjoins upon the elders to whom he writes. But these were no more than the symbolic forms of blessing: the medium through which it was effectively brought to bear upon the sick man was "the prayer of faith" - prayer, that is offered in the single-minded, trustful attitude referred to in ch 1:6 and ch 4:8; and in humble recognition of the all-availing Name of the Lord Jesus. And this prayer, says James, shall "save" the sick, and the power of the Lord shall "raise him up"' (Neville Smart - *The Epistle of James*, Pg 183).

Verse 15: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick,

Prayer: *euche* (2171) - a wish, petition to God (from *euchomai* - to wish. See vs 16).

Faith: *pistis* (4102) - firm persuasion, conviction, confidence. Any prayer asked in faith will be heard and answered (Jam 1:5-8; Matt 21:22; 1 John 5:14-16).

Save: *sozo* (4982) - to deliver, protect or cure (physically or spiritually). James uses it primarily in the spiritual sense (see Jam 1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:20).

Sick: *kamno* (2577) - to toil, to tire due to work, "weariness of mind" (Vine) - (cp Heb 12:3; Rev 2:3).

The faithful prayers and words of encouragement from the elders are added to the prayers of the person who was wearied with his state (see vs 14). His own faith being strengthened, he is made whole (cp Luke 5:20; 7:9-10, 48-50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42).

and the Lord shall raise him up;

Raise: *egeiro* (1453) - to waken, rouse (from sleep, sitting, disease, death).

In the physical sense this was what occurred (cp Matt 9:5-7; Mark 5:41-42; Acts 3:6-7; 9:40-41). Likewise we can be assured that the cure will be just as successful for the spiritually sick both in being lifted up in their spiritual state now (cp Rom 13:11; Eph 5:14) and at the resurrection (cp Matt 25:5-7).



and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Sins: *hamartia* (266) - state of sin, habitual acts.

Forgiven: *aphiemi* (863).

There is a connection between sin and sickness. In general all sickness is caused by sin (see Gen 3). Some sickness was the direct result of transgression (cp Deut 28:15,20,45; 2 Chron 26:16-20; 2 Kings 5:20-27; John 5:14; 1 Cor 11:29-30). However, not all sickness is the direct result of a person's specific sins as is seen in the instance and lessons of the book of Job (cp also John 9:2-3). Ultimately the removal of sin will result in the removal of sickness and death (cp Isa 33:24; Psa 103:3; Luke 5:18-26; Rev 21:4; 22:3).

A proper paraphrase of this would be, "If he has committed sins...(which have given rise to his sickness)..." Thus, here James is referring to a sickness that may or may not have been caused by sin (this is seen in the word "if"). In the absolute sense all have sinned (Rom 3:23), but the sickness may have a symptom of a spiritual need. Forgiveness is based on the fact that sin has been acknowledged and repented of (see notes on vs 16). This repentance was shown in the man going to the elders in the first place (vs 14). It is possible that the sins themselves can cause mental sickness and depression of mind when a person considers how they have failed to manifest their Father's character. This particularly applies if they are labouring under a feeling of unforgiven guilt. Obtaining encouragement from those of strong example and seeking forgiveness of sins will lift the burden from their minds.

Verse 16: Confess *your* faults one to another,



Confess: *exomologeo* (1843) - to acknowledge openly (cp Phil 2:10-11). "Confess therefore" (Roth) - (cp vs 15).

Faults: *paraptoma* (3900) - a sideslip, error, transgression, trespass (cp Col 2:13).

The word is used in the sense of an injury against another (cp Matt 6:14-15; 18:35), thus the next phrase - "one to another". James is not telling us to abase ourselves before others, but that if we have sinned and injured another in the process (especially our Heavenly Father!), then we should not hesitate to admit our faults to others and seek forgiveness. That way peaceful relationships can flourish in the Ecclesia.

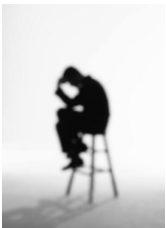
One to another: *allelon* (240) - another of the same sort.



Confession of faults is a pre-requisite to the restoration of spiritual health (cp Psa 32:5; Prov 28:13; Matt 18:15-17; Luke 17:3-4; 1 John 1:8-10). We should not hide our problems but should seek a cure. In this case, the man needed to recognise his error which caused the sickness. By sharing our failings with others, we can gain encouragement from our brethren. Those who have already overcome can sympathise with us and help us to overcome in the future (cp Heb 4:15-16; 2:17-18).

This open confession also prevents ill feeling amongst brethren for wrongs committed, as we will be humbled by the realisation of our own personal weakness and the common need for Divine strength and forgiveness. Even James acknowledged that he had weaknesses (cp Jam 3:2).

This is not an endorsement of the Catholic “confessions”. It is not uplifting or glorifying to God if we let our minds dwell on all the filth of human nature. Rather James is speaking of being open and honest in the Truth, and not being hypocritical in our appearance to others. The confession is an acknowledgment in recognition that “all have sinned” between injured and offending parties (cp Matt 18:15), and among trusted friends and counsellors.



Thought to think about and do

Are we humble enough to be prepared to admit our faults to others? Often we may injure someone - by word or by deed, and yet we don't say sorry and seek forgiveness because our pride forbids us. James is asking us to adopt the spirit of meekness - a spirit that allows us firstly to see our faults, and secondly to be able to try to fix them up.

The greatest confession of our faults and particularly our fleshly nature is done at our baptism (cp Matt 3:6; Rom 10:9-10), at which time all our trespasses are forgiven us (cp Col 2:11-13).



Thought to think about and do

Have we made that step to make a public confession of our faith, or have we put this vital act of doing the Word off, content to sit back and merely hear the Word?

and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.



Roth: “And be praying in each other's behalf”.

Pray: *euchomai* (2172) - to wish (cp 3 John 2).

Confessing to one another is not enough. James now exhorts us to also intercede for others, whether we are the sick or not. Intercession is seen as one of the great roles of Christ (Rom 8:26,27,34; Heb 7:25), yet we also can pray for others, just as others in Scripture have done (e.g. Moses (Exo 32:11-14), Daniel (Dan 9:3-20) and Paul (Phil 1:3-4; Col 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Tim 1:3; Philem 4)). The sick should pray with those in whom they have confided to seek God's help. The whole Ecclesia can be united in knowing that others need our prayers and that we need the prayers of others. This is fulfilling the Royal Law (cp Jam 2:8) - showing concern for each other's welfare.



What can we pray to God for concerning others? How does focusing our mind on the needs of others help our own spiritual development?

Healed: *iaomai* (2390) - to cure. Used physically (cp Matt 8:13; Mark 5:29; Luke 6:17; John 5:13) and spiritually (cp Matt 13:15; Heb 12:13; 1 Pet 2:24).

PROCESS FOR OVERCOMING WEAKNESS IN AFFLICTION

In General

Look to the example of the prophets longsuffering in their hardships (vs 10).
 Look to the endurance of Job (vs 11).
 Focus on the ultimate purpose of Yahweh (vs 11).

Specifically

Pray to God (vs 13).
 Acknowledge His help (vs 13).
 Seek additional strength from the spiritually mature and from the Word of God (vs 14).
 Recognise and confess faults (vs 16).
 Pray for one another (vs 16).

The whole Ecclesia benefits from this process. Because we are all of the same flesh (cp vs 17) we are mutually strengthened and uplifted when burdens are lifted off our shoulders and placed before God in prayer.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.



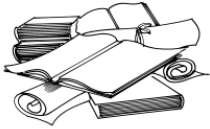
RSV: "The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects".
 RV: "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working".

The word "fervent" does not appear in the original Greek text.

Effectual: *energeo* (1754) - to be active, efficient, to put forth power, work (cp 2 Cor 1:6; Gal 5:6; 1 Thess 2:13).

Prayer: *deesis* (1162) - a petition (for a need).

Avaieth: *ischuo* (2480) - to have (or exercise) force, to have strength to overcome.



Righteousness, in this verse, is not the same as perfection of character. The righteous man here is one who has made himself right with God - one to whom righteousness has been imputed by virtue of his faith (see *Elpis Israel* - The Constitution of Righteousness - Pg 141-146). He is single-minded (cp Jam 1:6-

8). He asks according to God's will (cp Jam 4:3; 1 John 5:14-15). His prayers will be granted by God and be powerful in their operation and results. (See Psa 34:15; Prov 15:8,29; 1 Pet 3:12). Not only does it strengthen those who pray, but also those for whom the prayer is made (cp 1 Kings 17:20-24; 2 Kings 4:33-37; Job 42:8-10).

James has shown how Abraham and Rahab were made righteous by works of faith (Jam 2:21-25); that righteousness is not produced by wrath (Jam 1:20), but rather is manifested through peace (Jam 3:18); that the righteous suffer persecution (Jam 5:6); and that God answers their requests (Jam 5:16).

James uses the example of Elijah as an outstanding illustration of his words.

Verse 17: Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are,



Like passions: *homoioopathes* (3663) - similarly affected, "like nature" (RV mg). This word only elsewhere occurs in Acts 14:15.

Elijah was subject to exactly the same nature are we are. He -

- had blamed Yahweh for his adversity (1 Kings 17:20; cp Jam 1:13),
- had shirked his responsibilities at times (1 Kings 19:3-4; cp Jam 1:22),
- had been subject to persecution and affliction (1 Kings 19:2; cp Jam 5:6,10,13; 2:6),
- had engaged in grudging against his brethren (1 Kings 19:10,14; Rom 11:2-3; cp Jam 5:9),

yet his prayers were heard. Likewise, in spite of our faults, God will hear our prayers if we approach Him in the right manner. Elijah was a justified man because he responded to the still small voice of God. His name means "My strength (El) is Yahweh" (contrast this to the sick man of Jam 5:13-16). He had prayed on behalf of the sick (cp 1 Kings 17:21). But his main objective was to turn the hearts of his people from their sins back to God (cp 1 Kings 18:37; Mal 4:5-6; Luke 1:17).

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.

Earnestly: *proseuche* (4335) - prayer. Literally "He prayed with prayer" (mg). This Hebraism emphasises the intensity of Elijah's petition.

Rom 15:30; Col 4:12; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12.



Rain: *brecho* (1026) - to moisten, wash. (See Rev 11:6). This word indicates both rain and dew.

On the earth: *ge* (1093) - soil of a country, territory. "On that land" (Diag). This refers to the Land of Israel in this case (cp 1 Kings 18:1 - soil).



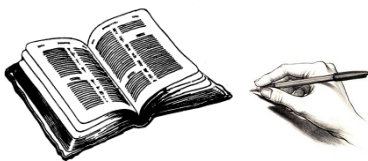
This occasion is recorded in 1 Kings 17:1 and 18:1. Although the record doesn't specifically say that Elijah prayed for the drought, the words "before whom I stand" in 1 Kings 17:1 indicate that Elijah had previously approached God in prayer in order to seek a blessing upon his proclamation to come. The prayer was not given out of personal spite but because he loved his people.

They needed to be humbled that they might turn back to God (cp 1 Kings 18:37). It was given in accordance with, and for, the application of the Law (see Deut 11:16-17; compare the acts of Ahab - 1 Kings 16:30-33). The fact that God heard the prayer and answered it, shows the power that is available in the prayer of the righteous to help those in need. The shutting up of heaven strongly indicates a power beyond man, but which could be effected in cooperation with God's will (cp Rev 11:6).

1 Kings 18:1 states that the rain was to come again in the third year. This is reconciled with James by the fact that Israel has a period of six months in the summer without rain. There was a three year period without the normal rain, plus the usual six months totalling three and a half years since the last rain fell (cp Luke 4:25).

Christ's ministry likewise occupied three and a half years in a period of drought as far as the nation was concerned. At the conclusion of this period there was an outpouring of rain in the form of the Holy Spirit (cp Acts 2:17; Joel 2:23,28 with notes on Jam 5:7).

The brethren would be able to identify with the principle of drought as they had recently experienced a famine throughout the land (cp Acts 11:28).



Three and a half units of time is often used in Scripture. Discover where else it appears (see also 3 and 1/2 days; time, times and dividing of time; 350 years; 1260 years). What is the common theme for this unit of time?

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

Rain: *huetos* (5205) - shower. It is given by God as a blessing.



1 Kings 8:35-36; Job 38:26-28; Jer 14:22; Acts 14:17.

Brought forth: *blastano* (985) - to germinate, yield, spring up.

The events that surrounded Elijah's prayer for the restoration of the rain are recorded in 1 Kings 18:42-45. The intensity and concentration that he put into his prayer is evident. His prayer was not a mere utterance of words. As a result it was answered with fruit being brought forth. Similarly, following the time of Christ, much fruit came forth to be harvested after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (cp Acts 2:41). Patient waiting for the fruit is rewarded (cp Jam 5:7). We will also bring forth fruit if we pray in the right manner.



Elijah didn't give up after his first prayer but continued praying for rain. What lesson can we learn about prayer from this? Find some quotations that confirm your answer.

At the same time that God answered Elijah's prayer, He was teaching Elijah that he had weaknesses. Elijah thought that with the rain, the people would return to God. But he found that Jezebel was still in control. He fled, despondent, only to be taught that it was not rain, wind, fire or earthquake that would turn the hearts of the people, but the still small voice. The prayers of the righteous are heard but they may not be answered in the way expected.



When we pray, should we expect God to answer our prayer in the way we think it should be answered? What should be our attitude to the expected outcome of our prayers?

There is another warning here for James' readers. Elijah's prayer was effective as far as the natural elements were concerned, but the people's hearts were not turned to God. How would the readers respond to the prayer of James the Just? (See vs 19-20).



5:19-20 - RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD ERRING BRETHREN

James concludes his Epistle with words of encouragement for those who stray from the truth (and by extension those who work for the spiritual welfare of the Ecclesia).

The Greek text in these verses doesn't indicate clearly who is being written to - the sinner, or the one converting him from his error. But literal translations seem to favour the erring person, or at least the brethren in general.



"Brethren, if any one among you may wander from the truth, and may turn back any one him, let him know, that the one having turned a sinner out of a wandering way of him, will save a soul from death, and will hide a multitude of sins" (Diag lit).

"My Brethren, if any one among you wander from the truth, and some one turn him back; know you, that he who turns back a sinner from his path of error will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins" (Diag).

The context also suggests that James is addressing the erring person for a number of reasons.

1. James begins by using the term "Brethren". Throughout his Epistle this is used as a term of endearment to encourage those who need strengthening (see Jam 1:2,16,19; 2:1,5,14; 3:1,10,12; 4:11; 5:7,9,10,12).
2. James has just completed a section encouraging the sick to seek support from those who can help. This section continues that encouragement.
3. In his whole Epistle, James has been addressing his remarks to those who need turning back from wandering off the true path. In his final words, it seems more appropriate to conclude with a strong appeal to them, rather than turn to a different group who would have known the effect of their work anyway.

Verse 19: Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him;

Brethren: James makes his last heartfelt statement to his people.

Err: *planao* (4105) - to roam, wander (like a planet), be lead astray, be deceived.



What do these quotations say about erring from the Truth?

• Matt 18:12-13

• Tit 3:3

• Heb 5:2

• 1 Pet 2:25

• 2 Pet 2:15

What are the two main ways of erring from the Truth, and how does this apply to us in our lives?

Convert: *epistrepho* (1994) - to revert, turn about, to bring back. The opposite of "err". (Compare Matt 18:3; Luke 22:32; 1 Pet 2:25; see Dan 12:3). This is also the work of Elijah (cp 1 Kings 18:37; Mal 4:6; Luke 1:17). The conversion of one who has lost their way is one of the highest forms of service that we can perform as shepherds to others (cp Eze 34:4,16).

There are great pressures from the world upon God's people, causing them to stray. James has outlined the dangers that the brethren will face and has given the solution to overcoming them. Now he gives his final exhortation which encompasses all he has written so far.

Verse 20: Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death,



Let him know: "Be ye taking note" (Roth). This is an important point that James wants us to understand.

Know: *ginosko* (1097) - to come to understand completely (a process of knowledge by experience).

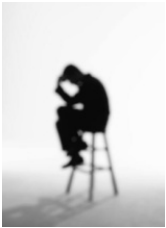
Error: *plane* (4106) - a straying. This is the root word of "err" (vs 19). A sinner is one who has been led astray by the error of the wicked (cp 2 Pet 3:17; Jude 11; 2 Thess 2:11).

Way: *hodos* (3598) - a road, progress along a route, way of thinking (cp Matt 7:13-14). The sinner is on "his" way, and is no longer on God's way (cp Jam 1:8).

Death: *thanatos* (2288) - (cp Jam 1:15; John 5:24; Prov 10:2; 11:4,30). This verse shows that the soul is not immortal (cp Eze 18:4).

This verse shows the importance of our work. Often we read of those who save someone from drowning or fire and who receive great attention. But the person they saved still has a life of frustration and death ahead of them. How much more purposeful is the saving of one from eternal death where they can glorify God in His Kingdom. Unfortunately in most of these cases, the person doesn't realise that they are "dying" and their rescuer finds himself the subject of ingratitude. Strength of purpose is required to help those who have strayed and do not realise it (cp Gal 6:7-10).

There are also some who are too hardened or too proud to seek help from others. Those who see brethren straying from the fold should work to restore them again with care, tact and humility knowing that we all have weaknesses (cp Gal 6:1; Jude 22-23. See Lev 19:17-18).



An appreciation of the seriousness of the consequences of the sinner's actions should motivate us to spare no effort in turning him back (cp Matt 10:28; Rom 11:13-15; 1 Cor 9:19-23). The process begins with ourselves (cp Psa 32:5-6; 51:1-3), and it requires that we continue in doing God's will (cp 1 Tim 4:15-16). As in the example of Elijah, we need to realise that it is the still small voice of reason, and evidence of God manifest in our lives that is required. Then, in appreciation for what God has done for us, we will seek to convert others (cp Psa 51:7-13), as is our duty (cp Gen 4:9; Eze 3:17-21). Those who help sinners and assist them in obtaining that covering for their sins are manifesting love for their neighbours and fulfilling the Royal Law (cp Jam 2:8; 1 Pet 4:8; 1 Cor 13:4-8; Prov 10:12; 17:9), the greatest example of this being the Lord Jesus Christ (cp Matt 1:21; 1 Tim 1:15). On the other hand, if we don't desire our brethren to be in God's Kingdom, then we are astray ourselves as we are not manifesting God's will (cp 1 Tim 2:4).

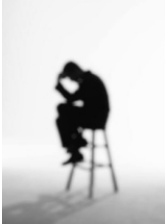
and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Hide: *kalupto* (2572) - to cover up, conceal so that no trace can be seen. In relation to sins, "hide" signifies "to cause them to be forgotten", "to procure pardon".

Multitude: *plethos* (4128) - a fullness, large number.

Sins: *hamartia* (266) - state of sin.

The sinner in repenting and turning back to God has the means for his sins to be forgiven (cp Jam 5:14-16; Psa 32:1-6).



How can we as young people apply this verse in our lives? What does it imply about our responsibility to others as we grow in the Truth?

Perhaps James' mind in these last two verses is still in the life of Elijah the prophet. In his ministry, the only people that Elijah actually accomplished his purpose with were Gentiles. In 1 Kings 17, he saved a child from death (1 Kings 17:17-23). His method of prayer bore a marked similarity to the method mentioned in Jam 5:14-16, and upon the woman's confession of her faults (cp Jam 5:16), her multitude of sins were hidden (1 Kings 17:17,24). Elijah's desire was to turn the hearts of the people back to God. This also sums up the purpose of James in writing his Epistle - he desired the salvation of his people. He wanted his readers to know his motivation. It was not to condemn them and display their faults, but to save them from death. James is prompting his readers to consider what he has done in writing his Epistle - highlighted their errors and given them an opportunity to change their ways. What will their response to this be? Will

they appreciate that they will be saved from eternal death if they heed his exhortation? There is a need to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (Jam 1:19). The people didn't listen to Elijah - the warning for James' readers was "would they listen to him"?

James concludes his Epistle abruptly (which emphasises his final thought) but not without warmth. His constant use of the term "Brethren" shows his care and concern for the brotherhood, and his words show him to be a man of holiness, whose way of life was consistent with his teaching. He has emphasised the importance of the Word of God given us, and our responsibility to respond with works of faith in loving service to the Father of Lights and to others. He has exhorted us in our service to show forth the godly wisdom from above, not the earthly wisdom from below, and he has instructed us in how to show the distinction between these two things and the principle of separation from the world, in our way of life - in our actions, thoughts and the use of our tongue. Finally, he has encouraged us - that in the face of trials we may be longsuffering and endure to the end, even unto the coming of the Lord, that we may share the joy of the Kingdom with him and with those that have shared life's journey with us, helping and being helped by one another along the way. But perhaps above all, he has shown with clarity the shortcoming of human nature, and lifted our minds to the wonderful character of our Heavenly Father who has begotten us with His Word of Truth. May we learn to manifest that same character to the glory of God.

My beloved brethren...

"Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only".