

As James brings his epistle to a close in this final chapter, he encourages his readers to patiently wait for the return of Christ despite the hardships they are enduring. He also emphasizes the need for and power of prayer in the face of persecution and sickness. James uses the example of Elijah to show us that prayer is a powerful tool that God has given to each of us to accomplish great things.

**Verses 1-6:** Following up on the previous verse (**James 4:17** “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”), James now condemns those rich who were not doing good but were instead using their wealth to take advantage of others. They were withholding pay from their employees, falsely accusing people in order to condemn and executed them for their supposed crimes, and were indulgently seeking various forms of pleasure. James declares that God has heard the cries of those they have oppressed and the sins of the offenders will catch up with them.

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

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**“Be patient** [*longsuffering without losing heart*] **therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord**” – James now speaks to the “brethren” (genuine believers) who are suffering under the oppression of the rich (v. 1-6) and those who hate them for their faith in Christ. James urges these believers not to allow their suffering to cause them to lose heart as they await the return of Jesus Christ. **“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”** – James uses the illustration of a farmer who knows that it takes time for the seed he has planted to bear fruit. He understands that certain things must happen (“the early and latter rain”) before the harvest can happen and doesn’t become impatient because the seed hasn’t yet borne fruit before that time.

**“Be ye also patient; stablish** [*to strengthen; to make firm*] **your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh**” – James urges his readers to be like the farmer and also be patient. They should encourage themselves with the fact that the day of the Lord’s coming is getting closer and will certainly arrive at the proper time.

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

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**“Grudge** [*to sigh; to groan*] **not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned**” – James cautions us not to become impatient with each other, which leads to grumbling and complaining about one another, which will eventually lead to more severe sins.

**“behold, the judge standeth before the door”** – Jesus will soon return and catch us in our sin of grumbling about our fellow believer. **Matt. 24:44** “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

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

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James’ readers were suffering from persecution and were tempted to give up and turn from their faith in Christ. James urges them to look at the OT prophets who suffered for speaking the word of the LORD. They serve as an example of those who suffered persecution and yet they exercised “patience” (endurance, steadfastness).

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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.

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**“Behold, we count them happy** [*to pronounce blessed (happy)*] **which endure**” – Looking back at the OT prophets, we consider them to be blessed by God for enduring such persecution because they were in the will of God. The same is true of Christians who are willing to endure hardship for the sake of Jesus Christ.

**“Ye have heard of the patience** [*endurance; steadfastness*] **of Job**” – James now reminds us of Job when he was afflicted by Satan in an attempt to prove that Job was only faithful to the LORD because of the LORD’s blessings (Job 1:9-11). Despite that fact that he lost everything he owned in one day, Job’s faith endured and he remained faithful to the LORD (Job 1:20-22; 2:9-10).

**“and have seen the end** [*termination; conclusion*] **of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy**” – James point is that after all that Job suffered, in the end the LORD blessed Job twice as much as he did before (Job 42:10, 12-13). James wants us to see that no matter what we have to suffer for Jesus Christ, God will bless us abundantly for enduring.

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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.

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**“But above all things, my brethren”** – James declares that what he is about to say is of primary importance.

**“swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath”** – It was a common practice in that day to swear oaths by something greater than yourself to convince someone that you were telling the truth. James is echoing Jesus’ condemnation of this practice (Matt. 5:33-36; 23:16-22).

**“but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation”** – We ought to have enough integrity and honesty to stick by what we say. Whether we say “yes” or “no” then our actions should agree with what we have said. James is repeating Jesus’ command that we should say what we mean and mean what we say. It should not require an oath to convince others that we are telling the truth if we are an honest person. If we do not do what we said we would do then we are lying and have broken God’s commandment. **Matt 5:37** “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

**“Is any among you afflicted [to suffer hardship]? let him pray”** – When we suffer hardships, we are to go to God in prayer to ask for His help and comfort.

**Psa. 55:22** “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

**Phil. 4:6** “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

**“Is any merry [cheerful; in good spirits]? let him sing psalms”** – The context seems to be contrasting the cheerful person with the afflicted person. This person is apparently cheerful because things are going well for him and he is not being afflicted. Such a person is to sing psalms to express his gratitude and praise to God that he is not suffering hardship.

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: 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.

**“Is any sick [weak; without strength] among you? let him call for the elders of the church”** – A third circumstance that James mentions is that of being “sick.” The Greek word can refer being weak because of sickness or disease, or it can refer to being weak due to an injury. In such a circumstance, James says that this person should ask for the “elders of the church” (pastors, deacons, etc.) to come to him (presumably to his sick bed).

**“and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord”** – The primary reason for calling the elders of the church is to pray for the sick person (v. 15), but James also advocates the anointing with oil in the name of the Lord. There are two possible reasons for the anointing: 1) Olive oil was often used medicinally in James’ day, from which we can derive the idea that not only are we to pray for the sick but also give them the medication that they need; 2) Oil represented the Holy Spirit, give the anointing a more ceremonial meaning. When Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs after giving them the authority to cast out devils and heal the sick, **Mark 6:13** mentions the anointing with oil with the healing of the sick: “And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.”

**“And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up”** – James says that the prayer of faith will be the determining factor that heals the sick, not any magical properties in the oil. James also makes it clear that the Lord is the One Who does the healing.

**“and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him”** – In addition to the physical healing, the prayer helps bring about spiritual healing as well. It was a common belief in that day that sickness was a result of sin, and even Jesus warned those that He healed that sin could cause worse things to happen to them (**John 5:14** “Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee”). Jesus also forgave sin when someone needing physical healing was brought to Him (**Matt. 9:2** “And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee”).

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

**“Confess your faults [transgressions; sins] one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed”** – The consensus among commentators is that James is talking about sins committed against another. If you have sinned against another believer, then you are to confess that sin to them. That believer is then to forgive and pray for you. The result will be the healing of the fellowship between believers and possibly physical healing. Sin in the church seems to be a reason at times for physical sickness and even death in the church: **1 Corinthians 11:29-30** (Paul, talking about partaking in the Lord’s Supper without taking it seriously) “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”

**“The effectual fervent [effective] prayer of a righteous man availeth much”** – Much can be accomplished when we pray “effectively.” Many of our prayers don’t make it past the ceiling because we either don’t pray in faith or we are just going through the motions. However, when we get serious about prayer and are praying according to God’s will, He will respond in a mighty way.

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

**“Elias was a man subject to like passions [with like feelings and affections] as we are”** – James now points out that “Elias” (Elijah) was just as human as we are, with similar strengths and weaknesses.

**“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”** – The Greek wording for “prayed earnestly” literally means “prayed with prayer.” The redundant wording is a Hebrew practice to emphasize intensity. Elijah did not casually ask the LORD to withhold rain. Rather, he prayed intensely with perseverance. James’ point is that Elijah was a man just like us and God answered his earnest prayer by withholding rain for 3.5 years.

**“And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit”** – The LORD also responded to Elijah’s second prayer and ended the 3.5 year drought (1 Kings 18:41-46).

**Verses 19-20:** James tells us that when we lead someone to God that has been following error then we have led that person away from eternal death and enabled that person to be forgiven of his/her sins.