

“JAMES” SERIES

#10: “Patience and Prayer”

SCRIPTURE: James 6:7-20

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. ⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 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.

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.

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 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. 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. 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. 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. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

¹⁹ My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, 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.

INTRO:

David wrote in the 37th Psalm:

***Fret not yourself because of evildoers;
be not envious of wrongdoers!***

***² For they will soon fade like the grass
and wither like the green herb.***

***³ Trust in the LORD and do good;
dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.***

***⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.***

- ⁵ *Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him, and he will act.*
- ⁶ *He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
and your justice as the noonday.*
- ⁷ *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way,
over the man who carries out evil devices!*
- ⁸ *Refrain from anger and forsake wrath!
Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.*
- ⁹ *For the evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.*
- ¹⁰ *In just a little while, the wicked will be no more;
though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there.*
- ¹¹ *But the meek shall inherit the land
and delight themselves in abundant peace.*

This seems to be James' message here in this concluding section of his letter.

Something that many of us find hard to accept is the fact that this world is evil and corrupt, and we can't change it. We can put our energy into trying to reverse the trend in the America we love and get it back to what our founding fathers intended, but the fact is, the society around us is going to get worse, regardless of what we do. I remember reading a description of America that said, "America is like an elephant hanging over a cliff, his tail tied to a daisy!" I know that's a hard pill to swallow, especially for those of us who have been avid patriots, working and praying to get people elected to office who will help turn America back to God and His standards, but I can't truthfully paint the kind of picture you'd like me to paint.

***JAMES EXORTS CHRISTIANS TO BE PATIENT SINCE GOD WILL DEAL WITH OUR OPPRESSORS
WHEN CHRIST RETURNS (VV. 7-12).***

He moves from talking about the oppression of the rich to the promise we have of the return of the Lord. "*Be patient until the coming of the Lord,*" he says. Do you keep up with the news? I know it's hard to listen and watch as you see godliness and morality constantly put down in favor of perversion that none of us ever thought possible – elementary school classes on transgenderism and drag queen shows – a major political party has become a "baby-killing" bunch – big tech and our Department of Justice has become politicized and weaponized against patriotism and patriots!

James points out "*how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.*" As the farmer waits patiently for the seed to sprout and the crops to mature, we believers must wait patiently for the Lord to return to deliver us and judge our oppressors.

He says, “(Meanwhile), *establish your hearts.*” What does he mean by that? He’s saying that as we wait patiently for the return of the Lord, we should firmly adhere to the faith in spite of the temptations and trials we’re going through. We should fortify ourselves for the struggle against the world, its sinful ways, and its difficult circumstances.

Today’s news points to growing civil unrest, increasing criminal behavior, Chinese efforts to shape the world in favor of the Chinese Communist Party, and the weakening of America’s military. Chinese Communism and Shariah Law-based Islam are stronger than ever. Patriotism and American freedom are being cast in a negative light in America’s colleges and universities. Conservative, patriotic professors are being culled from college faculties.

Now, a part of affirming your faith is being “*compassionate and merciful*” and not swearing oaths, but letting “*your ‘yes’ be yes and your ‘no’ (being) no.*” If you make a promise, keep that promise. In other words, your word ought to be better than a signed contract. Is that true of you?

Now let’s move on to...

...*WHAT JAMES SAYS ABOUT “PRAYER” (VV. 13-18)*

He writes specifically about prayers for relief from suffering and prayers for healing from sickness. Do you believe in praying for these things? I hope you do. I know that many of you pray for me and others in this congregation regularly. Thank you. I believe in prayer.

James says that if any of you are suffering, pray for relief or for endurance to persevere. And note that he says that the “*cheerful*” should sing praise. That makes sense. If you’re suffering, pray; if you’re not, sing praise.

Then he says that the sick should call for the elders of the church (note that he says “*elders,*” not the preacher [unless he’s an elder] and not just one elder) *and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*”

Pray over him? Okay. I get that. But what about this “*anointing him with oil*” business? Are we talking *religious* anointing or *medicinal* anointing? The Greek here indicates other than religious, so the “*anointing*” here is probably medicinal. In that day, olive oil was used for both external and internal healing. So, the oil was probably an adjunct to prayer. The two are mentioned together in other places in the New Testament.

But what about today? Today, we don’t anoint with oil. We have other more effective medicines. So, we are to pray for the sick while proper medicines and treatments are used. The doctors provide medicine and medical treatment; we provide prayer.

Verse 15 needs to be taken in context: *“And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.”* In other words, he will be raised up from his sick bed.

But what about this part: *“And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven”*? Apparently, in the process of calling for the elders and in the elders praying over him, he confesses his sins, and John tells us in his first letter that if we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1st John 1:9).

The summation James gives us is in verse 16: *“...confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”* We should not only call for the elders of the church to pray for us, but we should *all* be praying for one another and confessing our offenses toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. Such actions will produce healing, both spiritual and physical.

In the final two verses of James,

HE ISSUES A SUMMONS TO ACTION (VV. 19-20)

He has spoken about the many problems in the church: sinful speech, disobedience, unconcern for others, worldliness, quarrelling, and arrogance. Now he encourages every believer to take the initiative in bringing any who have wandered from the truth in any of these ways back into fellowship with God and the church.

“The truth” is not just doctrinal issues; it includes both doctrinal *and* behavioral issues. It’s believing scriptural teachings and living a genuine Christian life.

The believer who sees his brother or sister wandering from the fold should seek with all his power to bring him or her back. To bring a brother or sister back is to not only save his or her soul but to cover a lot of sin. Who’s sin? The sin of the one who was wandering away. Some have interpreted this to refer to the sins of the one who brings a brother or sister back into the fold, but the context would indicate a reference to the sins of the wanderer.

IN CLOSING...

So, we end this study of the letter of James to the Jewish believers scattered around the known world. What a powerful message James delivers!

Next Sunday, I will start a new series on *“Bible Typology.”* It will be a repeat of a series I did six years ago. Many of you weren’t here then. I think you’ll find it to be a huge help in understanding how all the parts of the Bible fit together.