

A Study of James 5

I. Outline.

1. Warnings to the wicked wealthy pleasure-seekers (James 5.1-6).
2. Deal with affliction with patience (James 5.7-11).
3. Be honest and avoid oath-taking (James 5.12).
4. Pray and sing (James 5.13).
5. The prayer of faith shall save the sick (James 5.14-15).
6. Confess faults to one another (16).
7. Elijah as an example of one who prayed (James 5.17-18).
8. Be interested in those who err from truth (James 5.19-20).

II. Summary.

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

III. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: The Period of the Church.

If you are not familiar with the 15 Bible Periods, please click here: <http://bit.ly/Rvd8gW>

IV. Words/Phrases to Study

- James 5:1... **GO TO NOW, YE RICH MEN**—"Though the rich are here directly addressed, it is not likely that they were Christians. (1) There is to them no exhortation to repentance; (2) they are not admonished to a better life; and (3) there is to them no promise of reconciliation to God. On the contrary, they are 'to weep and howl,' not in penitence, but in view of impending retribution and ruin. It would appear that the statement of the inspired writer is an apostrophe, wherein he turns aside, for the moment, to denounce the rich and to declare their ultimate doom, for the edification of the poor saints who were experiencing oppression at the hands of the rich" [Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, p. 256]. |||| 1-6... "Another point of justice that is clear in both the book of James and in the other Scriptures is God's insistence upon social justice. In the Old Testament, as well as the New, the prophets have preached vigorously against injustices toward the poor. (Isa. 5 :8; Amos 3:10; 5 :11 ; Amos 8:4-7; Amos 11:28; etc.). Feeding the hungry and caring for the orphans and widows (but not the indolent lay people) is a common concern of God's Word" [Donald Fream, *A Chain of Jewels from James and Jude*, p. 197].
- James 5.2... **YOUR RICHES ARE CORRUPTED**—"If you lived back then, and had a lot of produce, you were considered rich. See Luke 12.16-21. With that food, you could get anything you wanted, especially during hard times. Joseph, in the Old Testament, purchased the entire nation of Egypt, all the livestock, and the people themselves with food that he had stored for the Pharaoh. James is saying, 'Your crops have spoiled.' Spoiled crops are useless. They won't get you anything. These riches are worthless [Cobb, Bradley (2014-06-05). *Justified by Works: A Study of the Letter from James* (Cobb's Commentaries) (Kindle Locations 3444-3448). Cobb Publishing. Kindle Edition].

- James 5:3... **YOUR GOLD AND SILVER IS CANKERED AND THE RUST OF THEM....**—“Gold and silver don't rust. So James is using a very colorful illustration here. Imagine your gold and silver rusting away. James is telling the people that regardless of what type of wealth they trusted in, it would be worthless. In fact, James tells them that these forms of wealth are ALREADY worthless (look at the verb tenses)” [Cobb, Bradley *Justified by Works: A Study of the Letter from James* (Kindle Locations 3457-3461)].
- James 5:4... **KEPT BACK BY FRAUD**—“I do not know of many popular vices that do not find their way into the church in one form or another and this one is no exception. Instead of recognizing ungodly business men for what James said they are, it is the general practice at more and more places to put such men into the rulership position (call them ‘elders’) just because they have been successful in business. ... Such a man will rule or ruin. When he rules he will run things as he does his business. The customer is always right, you never argue with anyone, all things must be positive, and growth is the only thing that matters or that works” [Roger Jackson, “Judgment on the Wicked Rich,” in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 227].
- James 5:5... **NOURISHED YOUR HEARTS AS IN A DAY OF SLAUGHTER**—“...you live as if it were every day a day of sacrifices, a festival; and hereby your hearts are fattened and nourished to stupidity, dullness, pride, and an insensibility to the wants and afflictions of others. Some may say, ‘What harm is there in good cheer, provided people do not spend above what they have?’ What! Is it no harm for people to make gods of their bellies, and to give all to these, instead of abounding in acts of charity and piety? Is it no harm for people to unfit themselves for minding the concerns of their souls, by indulging the appetites of their bodies? Surely that which brought flames upon Sodom, and would bring these miseries for which rich men are here called to weep and howl, must be a heinous evil! Pride, and idleness, and fullness of bread, mean the same thing with living in pleasure, and being wanton, and nourishing the heart as in a day of slaughter” [Matthew Henry’s *Commentary on the Whole Bible*].
- James 5:6... **YE HAVE CONDEMNED AND KILLED THE JUST**—“The Just, or Righteous, One James says they murdered is Christ (Acts 3:14; Acts 7:52; Acts 22:14; 1 John 2:1). It was these self-indulgent rich who crucified Jesus. Yet, our Lord submitted to them without resistance (James 5:6; Isaiah 53:7; 1 Peter 2:21-23)” [Gary C. Hampton, *Practical Christianity*, an e-Sword Module].
- James 5:7... **BE PATIENT**—“The Greek term translated ‘patience’ in this verse is often rendered ‘longsuffering’ in other passages (cf., Rom 2:4; Eph 4:2; Col 1:11; 3:12). This attitude will make it possible to endure delays and bear suffering and never give in. The use of the term here, as well as in other passages, reflects patience with persons. This definition gives further credence to the fact that these ‘brethren’ were being victimized by the ruthless rich of the preceding verses. In such trials the Christian’s course of action was not to give up the faith, nor resort to physical violence, but only to endure delay and bear the suffering without giving in ‘until the coming of the Lord’” [Richard Massey, “Patience Enjoined and Swearing Prohibited,” in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 233]. Cf., song # 350, “Farther Along,” in *Church Gospel Songs and Hymns*.
- James 5:8... **THE COMING OF THE LORD DRAWETH NIGH**—“Whether James has reference to the destruction of Jerusalem which was then only a few years away, at which time the persecutions of the disciples were to be somewhat eased, or to the personal appearance on earth of Jesus for the judgment, the time would be comparatively short when the endless duration after the judgment is considered” [Zerr].
- James 5:10... **TAKE, MY BRETHREN, THE PROPHETS, WHO HAVE SPOKEN IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, FOR AN EXAMPLE OF SUFFERING...**—“The prophets spoke in the name of the Lord or by the Lord's authority, therefore their messages were inspired (2 Peter 1:20-21). It is a myth to think that faithfulness will prevent bad things in this life from happening to us. Many people in the past have suffered for doing the right thing (Acts 14:22; 1 Timothy 3:12). Since the prophets spoke the truth and were persecuted (often by professed believers in God) we must realize that everyone isn't going to

embrace and admit the truth when they hear it. We must reject the idea that the truth is what most people believe or that the ‘mainstream’ is to be always equated with the narrow way (Matthew 7:13-14)” [Mark Dunagan, *Mark Dunagan Commentaries*, an e-Sword Module].

- James 5:11... **THE PATIENCE OF JOB**—“Job is James' last example of one who patiently bore suffering. We are able to see the reward of that patience because we know the whole story (Job 42:10-17). While we do not know the whole story in our own lives, we can be assured that the end will work out for our good (James 5:11; Romans 8:28; Romans 8:31-39)” [Gary C. Hampton].
- James 5:12... **SWEAR NOT**—“There may well be a connection between this prohibition and the foregoing instructions on patience. Perhaps the afflictions that these brethren were experiencing were somehow influencing them to make sinful oaths. Under pressure, Peter resorted to this very practice as he swore with an oath that he did not know Jesus (Mt 26:69-75). One thing is certain: This type of swearing and profane oath taking is strongly forbidden, as is indicated by the phrase, but above all things.” [Richard Massey, “Patience Enjoined and Swearing Prohibited,” in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 245-46]. |||| “That is was not the design of James (and our Lord, in Mt 5:34-37) to forbid all oaths, including those of a judicial nature, seems evident from the following considerations: (1) Jesus, before Caiaphas, testified under oath (Mt 26:63-64); (2) Paul often solemnly asserted things in the form of an oath (Rom 1:9; cf., 2 Cor 1:23; Ph 1:8; Gal 1:20); (3) God swore by himself when he could swear by no greater (Heb 6:13); (4) The prophets often involved the names of God in their solemn affirmations (Isa 65:16). Thus the sin forbidden in this section is that of profanity; the frivolous, flippant use of the names of God and sacred things” [Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, p. 292]. Cf., Matthew 23:16-22.
- James 5:13... **IS ANY MERRY**—“One ‘cheerful,’ in the original sense of the term, is one in good spirits, one possessed of a frame of mind that is free of anxiety and disturbing problems. The verb also occurs in Acts 27:22, 25, where Paul besought his traveling companions to ‘be of good cheer.’ The word used by James describes an attitude exactly opposite to that indicated in the word ‘suffering,’ in the earlier portion of the verse. It is not improbable that the ‘suffering’ one and the ‘cheerful’ one of this passage are the same person. That is, he who is suffering is to pray to the Father to lift his burden; and, when it is gone, to be cheerful, and to express such in praise and worship” [Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, p. 297].

V. Lessons & Applications.

- James 5:1-6. “Have you ever thought about, wished for, or prayed for wealth? Do you think you would be strong enough to handle it? I have seen wealth change a lot of good people. That is not to be blamed on the wealth, for the Bible says the love of money is the real culprit (1 Tm 6:10). I do know this: the fact that statistics show that the average contribution per capita in the Lord’s church is two or three per cent is a good indication that most of my brethren could not handle it because they are not faithful in the little they have (Luke 16:10). The abundant life consists of more than material wealth. We must first seek the kingdom and the righteousness of God (Mt 6:33). When we do that we are promised that we will have enough (Ph 4:19). The best advice is inspired advice, and that advice is, ‘Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee’ (Heb 13:5). ‘And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition (1 Tm 6:8-9)” [Roger Jackson, “Judgment on the Wicked Rich,” in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 231].
- James 5:7 **BE PATIENT**. “Regardless of how broad one’s educational background might be, or the depth of his Biblical knowledge, or even the measure of his loyalty to the kingdom of God, no man is spiritually complete without one specific fundamental quality: patience (Js 1:2-4; Gal

5:22-23; 2 Pt 1:5-11). Our present age of overnight express, push button conveniences, and slick solutions requires minimal patience and provides scant opportunity to develop any. Unlike the worldly life of comfort and ease, the Christian life is filled with many difficult challenges (Luke 9:23; Acts 14:22; 2 Tm 3:12). The strait and narrow course that leads its sojourners to the glistening city of eternal day is replete with demanding challenges which necessitate a patient, longsuffering spirit (Mt 7:13-14; Ps 23:4). Along this avenue there will be a world of rigorous toil (Mt 25:34-40; Mk 16:15; Jn 4:34-35; 1 Cor 15:58), many grueling spiritual battles (1 Tm 6:12; 2 Tm 2:3-4), an abundant array of appealing temptations to overcome (Js 1:12-15; 1 Pt 2:11; 1 Jn 2:15-17), and last but not least, persecutions (2 Tm 3:12; 1 Pt 4:12). Salvation will not come easily. For the Christian successfully to complete his journey and arrive safely upon Heaven's shore, he must give all diligence to add patience as one of the characteristics which will dominate his life (2 Pt 1:5-11). There exists a desperate need for more teaching and emphasis to be placed upon the vital subject of Christian endurance" [Richard Massey, "Patience Enjoined and Swearing Prohibited," in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 232].

- James 5.9 **GRUDGE NOT ONE AGAINST ANOTHER...** The ASV has the word MURMUR here for GRUDGE. "Murmuring is a sin that Christians must avoid. Patience and murmuring are incompatible. Murmuring is an attitude of unthankfulness. Characteristically it is not concerned with pleasing God; rather it seeks to satisfy self. The pleasant unity, which is such a blessing among brethren (Ps 133:1), is disrupted by the aggravated grumbler. ... The remedy for murmuring is found in such commands as 1 Corinthians 10:10-11, ... The message is loud and clear: 'God destroys murmurers.' " [Richard Massey, "Patience Enjoined and Swearing Prohibited," in *Studies in James*, edited by Dub McClish, p. 238]. Cf., Ph 2:14-15.
- James 5.10 **TAKE, MY BRETHREN, THE PROPHETS, WHO HAVE SPOKEN IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, FOR AN EXAMPLE OF SUFFERING AFFLICTION, AND OF PATIENCE.** There are many fine ways to study the Bible. One of the most helpful is through a study of Bible characters. James is recommending just such a study to the saints in the first century and certainly we benefit greatly today from such a study. Those faithful Bible characters are some of the first heroes that our young children should have as we bring them into our Bible classes. Our learning from those Bible characters is a never-ending process as we continue to grow in Christ. We have the record of many Bible characters who did the WRONG thing and we learn from them what NOT to do. Whenever we begin to think that we have great problems, we can always remind ourselves of the suffering of Job and so many lessons can be learned and remembered from those men and women, boys and girls about whom we read in Scripture!
- James 5.12 **...BUT LET YOUR YEA BE YEA; AND YOUR NAY, NAY; LEST YE FALL INTO CONDEMNATION.** The basic teaching of this passage is that Christians are to be people who keep their word. We are not to make a promise and then neglect to keep it. People should be able to depend upon that which we say. We should have no need whatsoever to "prop up" our statements with some kind of oaths. Least of all should we be guilty of using the name of our God in vain, whether it be through direct use of His name or through some sort of euphemism. All such endangers our souls (Eph 4:29; Col 3:8-9).
- James 5.14 **IS ANY SICK AMONG YOU?...** There is much discussion among commentators about whether this sickness is physical or spiritual. I am not certain which is correct. I've believed for many years the reference was to physical sickness, but I have read the comments of Bradley Cobb and he makes six pretty good arguments for this illness being SPIRITUAL in nature. Here are his arguments from his commentary, *Justified by Works: A Study of the Letter from James*:
 1. "The word translated SICK (Greek: *astheneo*) is translated WEAK 22 times in the New Testament. In fact, WEAK is the most common translation of this word. Thayer defines the word as 'to be weak, feeble. To be without strength, powerless.' SICK is actually the last possible definition of this word.

2. Another piece of evidence that points to spiritual weakness is found in the next verse. The PRAYER of faith will save the weary one. The word translated PRAYER is everywhere else in the New Testament translated VOW (Acts 18.18; Acts 21.23). This is a personal vow to God.
3. It also says that the vow of faith will SAVE the weary one. The word translated SAVE is overwhelmingly used in the sense of salvation from sin (cf., Mark 16.16). It is used occasionally when someone is 'made whole' (Mark 9.22, for example), but that is not the primary meaning of this word. Just 6 verses later, James uses this exact same word to describe someone's soul being saved. The context, then, points to something spiritual, and not physical.
4. In addition, that same sentence says, '**THE VOW OF FAITH WILL SAVE THE WEARY ONE.**' The word WEARY ('sick' in most translations) only appears one other place in the New Testament, and there it is clearly a reference to being spiritually weary (Hebrews 12.3).
5. The next bit of evidence that spiritual weakness is under consideration is found in the end of verse 15: '**and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven of him.**' It's extremely difficult to comprehend God forgiving someone of all of his sins because he asked the elders to pray for some physical sickness he had. But it fits completely with the idea of the person asking for prayers for spiritual strength, making a vow of faith to the Lord.
6. The final piece of evidence in favor of this being spiritual weakness is found in verse 16. Confession of sins results in healing. 1 John 1.9 shows that confession of sins results in forgiveness of sins—a spiritual healing.

The evidence against spiritual sickness is that James mentions 'anointing him with oil' as part of the cure. This is very similar to what Jesus' disciples did when they went about casting out demons and healing the sick (Mark 6.13). It's also what the Good Samaritan did for the man he rescued (Luke 10.34), although in that case it wasn't sickness, but it was still for a physical injury. It is argued that since anointing with oil is mentioned, then, this demands that it is physical sickness under consideration.

However, consider 2 Samuel 12.18-23. David is in a state of mental distress over the sickness of his infant son. But when the child dies, David arises and anoints himself with oil, and gets back to the business of doing God's work. His anointing was a show of a mental decision to get back to work. It is possible that the reference here in James is something similar to that."

- James 5.16 **CONFESS YOUR FAULTS ONE TO ANOTHER**—"Because sin is so pervasive in human life, there is continual need for both spiritual sensitivity and appropriate action where sin has been committed' (Kent pp. 191-192). Draper notes, "Confession" in the original language comes from a Greek word meaning 'to say the same thing' or 'to agree with'. When we confess sin to God, we are agreeing with God's assessment of our lives. We say the same thing God says to us" (p. 164). Hence when we confess our sins we need to be honest and call such things what God calls them. In addition, it doesn't do any good to overstate the case and say things like, 'I'm just no good, I can't do anything right, others would be better off if I were dead.' Because such statements are not what God thinks about us" [Mark Dunagan].
- James 5.20 **LET HIM KNOW**... These words seem to be here for the purpose of ENCOURAGING just this kind of work. We certainly should have a strong desire to be part of a work that leads to the hiding of a multitude of sins. Helping the brother or sister who has fallen away to come back into faithfulness to the Lord surely is a work that is worthy of all of our very best efforts. It is a work that must not be neglected! ||||| "The 'two ways' tradition that has been so evident in James (Jas.3:13-18) again finds expression in this last paragraph with the reference to the 'erroneous way' in James 5:20 and the 'truthful way' in James 5:19. In a book that has so often utilized the sayings of Jesus and the writings of the OT, those two sources again inform James' closing counsel about the communal restoration of sinners. While this could be an allusion to the

parable of the lost sheep in Matthew 18:12-14, the theme of restoring a sinning brother is also prominent in Luke 17:3-4. The last expression about the covering of sins could allude to Proverbs 10:12. This passage also shares the theme of a sinning brother with the closing section of 1 John 5:16-17 - another book that also ends abruptly. In addition to James and John, Paul also issued some similar advice: **‘Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted’** (Galatians 6:1). Do you really care when you see a brother or sister losing their way? Do you make an effort to bring them back, or just callously chalk them off as giving evidence that they were never saved in the first place? James exhorts us strongly to do everything in our strength to bring them back. Rescuing them from death and covering their sins are major effects of our rescue operation. The last words of a sometimes stern letter remind the readers of the possibility of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.” [Dr. William Varner, <http://dribex.tumblr.com>].

VI. Questions.

True or False

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

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

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

Fill in the Blanks

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

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week's handout

ANSWERS to James 4 Questions... **01**—True (8); **02**—True (2); **03**—True (16); **04**—False (6); **05**—True (9); **06**—b (12); **07**—a (1); **08**—c (14); **09**—a (8); **10**—c (3); **11**—if, will, live (15); **12**—flee (7); **13**—resists (6); **14**—save, destroy (12); **15**—Knoweth, not, sin (17).

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

H D W V F R I C H S N P
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 B F P A T I E N C E I A
 W Y R E A P E D F A T Y
 R M I S E R I E S R H E
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AFFLICTED	ANOTHER	BEHOLD	BRETHREN	COME
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HOWL	LEST	LORD	MISERIES	NAME
NEITHER	PATIENCE	PATIENT	PRAY	PRAYER
RAIN	REAPED	RICH	SAVE	SICK
SINS	WEEP			

VIII. Crossword Puzzle.

James 5 (KJV): From Your Friends at Maple Hill Church of Christ Solutions at: http://maplehillchurchofchrist.org 3960 Scale RD, Benton, KY 42025-7875 Phone: 270.527.2744																
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<u>ACROSS</u>								<u>DOWN</u>								
01) When ____ call for the elders.								01) Do this when merry.								
02) Rich men are warned that this will come upon them.								03) This "lord" hears the cries of defrauded workers.								
05) Two times we are told to be this.								04) Another word for RUSTED (cf., ASV).								
08) Happens to garments.								06) Sometimes rust can be this.								
12) ____ him with oil.								07) Recommended to us as examples.								
14) Came upon Elias' second prayer.								09) It is possible to ____ from the truth.								
16) Quantity of sins mentioned.								10) Don't do this by heaven nor by the earth.								
17) Prayed earnestly.								11) Singular form of that which we are to confess to one another.								
								13) The last word in the chapter.								
								15) Grudge ____ one against another.								

IX. EXTRA CREDIT FOR “SUPER” Bible Students...

Will you please consider answering these three SIMPLE questions based on the Bible text of this chapter? I will try to make use of your answers. Bring them with you next week. Tear out this last sheet from the Study Guide and be prepared to put it in a basket. I think it will be a great help to all of those in the class if you will do so. Thank you in advance for your marvelous cooperation!

W O R D: What word would you like to know more about in this chapter?

W O N D E R: I wonder what this phrase, verse, or series of verses means...

W I S H: I wish myself—or others whom I know or even don’t know—would understand this fact, principle, or concept from this chapter...