

James 5

Introduction:

1. You were warned in chapter 1 against being a hearer and not a doer of God's word. Then obey this chapter!
2. As in many of Paul's epistles, James has various short exhortations and lessons before ending the epistle.
3. It is a shame that we have never known or seen real persecution or suffering for the gospel's sake, because we will not appreciate the prophecy of judgment in 5:1-6 and the comfort of patience in 5:7-11 as we should.
4. This final chapter ends commending those who convert others back to the way of truth taught here (5:19-20).

The Outline of James 5

1. A warning to rich enemies of judgment (5:1-6).
2. Patience at affliction will be rewarded (5:7-11).
3. A warning against foolish Jewish swearing (5:12).
4. A faith-based approach to godly living (5:13).
5. Instruction for miraculous healing (5:14-15).
6. Effectual ordinary prayer also works (5:16-18).
7. Soul winning is converting brethren (5:19-20).

Meditative Readings

Job 20:1-29

II Corinthians 5:1-11

Matthew 5:33-37

Isaiah 38:1-22

I Kings 17:1-7

II Thessalonians 1:3-10

Job 42:7-17

Matthew 23:16-22

Mark 6:7-13

I Kings 18:37-46

Philippians 1:27-30

Romans 8:17-25

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

Mark 16:17-20

I Kings 19:1-8

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

- A. The opening words of the chapter are emphatic words for attention and transition (see 4:13; Ec 2:1).
- B. There is no sin in being rich: these rich men were condemned for their wickedness (I Tim 6:17-19).
- C. If it is difficult for the rich to enter God's kingdom (Matt 19:24-26), and if God has chosen the poor for His children (I Cor 1:26-28; Jas 2:5), then we should know most rich to be enemies of the gospel.
- D. We first determine who these *rich men* are from several options, so we can rightly apply the words.
 1. They are **not** rich brethren in the Jewish churches James addressed by this epistle (1:1).
 - a. He spoke to the believing rich brethren in these churches much more positively (1:10-11).
 - b. He held out no similar hope at all for the rich reprobates condemned in this context (5:1-6).
 - c. He had identified a distinct and separate group of rich men from the rich brethren (2:1-7).
 2. They are **not** rich Jews of Jerusalem about to be swallowed up by Titus and his legions, for that great event did not bear upon the lives of these scattered Christian Jews among the Gentiles.
 - a. The rich Jews of Jerusalem did not persecute these scattered believers throughout the world.
 - b. Patience was required for this deliverance (5:7-11), but 70 A.D. was near (I Thess 2:16).
 - c. Patience by these believers did not get answered with relief before, during, or after 70 A.D.
 - d. If anything, all Jews – Christians or not – would have been despised and persecuted, rather than delivered, throughout the Roman world, during the horrible war years of 66-70 A.D.

3. They **are** rich enemies who persecuted the poor Jewish saints to whom James wrote this epistle.
 - a. He drew a distinction by encouraging *patience* for the Lord's coming in 5:7,8,10,11, which sets the brethren in a total different class from those who shall be severely judged (5:1-6).
 - b. He drew a contrast and division between the rich wicked from the brethren by *therefore* in 5:7, for this concluding word indicates that patience is based on certain judgment of the rich.
 - c. He used *brethren* for the first time as he began exhorting to patience, not repentance (5:7)!
 - d. He had already identified and described these rich blasphemers and enemies earlier (2:6-7).
 - e. Peter's epistles to the same persons also spoke of persecution (I Peter 1:6; 2:12; 3:16; 4:12).
 - f. It is a fact of scripture and history that both Jews and Gentiles persecuted Jewish Christians, for they were not aligned with either camp after their conversions (Acts 18:12-17; etc.).
- E. We next determine when the *miserias shall come upon them*, so we can rightly apply the words.
 1. James told the rich reprobates who persecuted the Christians that they should weep and howl.
 2. Here is no threat, but a warning of certain judgment on these wicked men for their wickedness.
 3. This is a prophecy in the second person of miseries that would come on the rich in the future.
 4. This is no exhortation to consider their ways or repent, but a prophetic promise of judgment.
 5. Prophecies in the second person are a trait of the prophets (Jer 48:1,46; 50:24; Zephaniah 2:5).
 6. The timing of these miseries is the last days (5:3) ... compare Matt 25:31-46 and I Tim 6:17-19.
 7. The timing of misery is the Lord's coming (5:7) ... compare II Thess 1:3-10 and Phil 1:27-30.
 8. It is at a time when the wicked rich shall be judged ... and grudging brethren as well (5:8-9)!
- F. We then determine why the apostle would utter such a blasting warning against these rich men.
 1. It is right to *weep and howl* when the Lord judges (Is 13:6; 15:2; 16:7; Jer 4:8; 47:2; Joel 1:4-7).
 2. Try to imagine a more effective form of comfort to suffering saints than this prophetic blast!
 3. He followed this promise of coming judgment on the rich by exhorting to patience (5:7-11).
- G. Rich men who mistreat the children of God shall face His full wrath in this life and/or the next life!
 1. Consider Doeg the Edomite, who slew the Lord's priests at Nob (I Samuel 21-22 and Psalm 52).
 2. Consider Ahab and Jezebel, who stole Naboth's vineyard and killed him (I Kings 21:17-24).
 3. Riches cannot help at all in the day of God's wrath (Ps 49:6-20; Prov 11:4,28; Luke 16:19-31).

2 *Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.*

- A. The riches and garments of these rich enemies were not destroyed and ruined yet, but they would be!
 1. This is a prophecy against the rich enemies of the believers, so James is describing their future.
 2. The verb tenses are present perfect, stating an action already completed, based on God's purpose.
 3. God's purpose is certain, so He calls things not yet done as if already done (Rom 4:17; Is 46:10).
- B. The Lord Jesus Christ had warned that any treasures on earth will never last (Matthew 6:19).
 1. Even silver and gold corrupt in various ways with time, but grains and herds most certainly do.
 2. Expensive garments, which are the outward show of rich men, certainly deteriorate (2:2-3).

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

- A. As in the previous verse, the Holy Spirit used the perfect tense to indicate the certainty of the canker.
- B. The corruption of riches witness against rich men, for it displays their foolishness in seeking them.
 1. Their riches are cankered and rusty: they were not put to use, but kept to their hurt (Eccl 5:13).
 2. Hoarding is a terrible evil and sin, for men should dispense riches as God does His (Prov 11:24).
 3. They shall die in their folly (Pr 49:6-20) and then give account to the great King (Matt 25:31-46).
 4. They had fraudulently held back wages from laborers, and the Lord of hosts would judge (5:4)!

5. Every master should take careful heed to be honest and just, for he has a Master (Col 3:22 - 4:1).
6. Riches here are described like a fire in their destructive ends, elsewhere like water (I Tim 6:9).
- C. Rich men heap treasure together for the last days as a condemning witness against them before God.
 1. We understand the last days here to be the last of the last days, or the end of this dispensation.
 2. James wrote in the last days (Acts 2:17; Heb 1:2), so further last days were coming (II Tim 3:1).
 3. The coming of the Lord in judgment is in the context (5:7,8,9), so we include the last day itself.
 4. We recall the timing of judgment of believers' enemies elsewhere (II Thes 1:3-10; Phil 1:27-30).
 5. Instead of laying up a good foundation, they treasure up God's wrath (I Tim 6:17-19; Rom 2:5).
 6. This is a terrible deception of riches, for instead of security it will bring judgment now and later.

4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

- A. Here are the crimes of the wicked rich, which witness against them by the riches they heap up (5:3).
- B. Who is the *Lord of Sabaoth*? He is the Lord of hosts, and He will be coming soon with His armies!
 1. Jesus is Lord of the sabbath day (Matt 12:8; Mark 2:28), but sabaoth has no relation to it at all.
 2. Sabaoth is a Hebrew word untranslated in the Greek N.T. Compare Rom 9:29 and Isaiah 1:9.
 3. One of the great names of God is Lord of hosts, for there is comfort in His armies (Jer 50:34).
- C. Oppressive masters who take advantage of employees will have to answer to the Lord of hosts!
 1. The cry of oppressed employees are heard as clearly in heaven as Israel's sighs (Ex 2:23-25).
 2. No matter how rich or powerful a master may be, there is one higher than the highest (Eccl 5:8).
 3. God hates the oppression of laborers (Lev 19:13; 25:39-43; Deut 24:14-15; Job 24:9-11; Psalm 140:12; Prov 14:31; 17:5; 22:16,22; 23:10-11; 28:8,27; 29:7; Jer 22:13-17; Mal 3:5).
 4. Godly employers will remember to be honest and just always (Job 31:13-15; Col 3:22 - 4:1).

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

- A. The wicked rich have no regard for the poor - they obsess about living luxuriously without restraint; and they have their good times now, as Abraham explained to the rich man in hell (Luke 16:19,25).
- B. They have their portion in this life, and then they find eternal poverty a curse (Ps 17:13-14; 49:6-20).
- C. They bask in feasting, as with plentiful meat at a slaughter (I Pet 4:3; I Sam 25:36; Prov 7:14; 17:1).
- D. The prophecy continues with this description of their great pleasure while the poor suffered (5:4).
- E. Let the righteous consider the danger of living at ease in these perilous times (4:8-10; Amos 6:1-7), especially in America where there is so much prosperity but so little fear of the Lord.

6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

- A. Here is the fourth crime of the wicked rich - (1) hoarding rather than dispensing riches, (2) getting riches by fraud, (3) living luxurious lives of excess, and (4) condemning and killing just men.
- B. There is no reason to leap to this being the Just One and referring to those who crucified our Lord.
 1. Those who killed Jesus Christ were specific Jews in Judea (Acts 7:52; 13:27; I Thes 2:14-16).
 2. While Jesus is called the Just One, there is no necessity in this context (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14).
 3. In an epistle where very little appeal is made to Jesus Christ, we can easily consider the context.
 4. James had described the wicked rich hauling these just saints before the judgment seat (2:6-7).
 5. James called for patience in light of this killing, which indicated just brethren suffering (5:7).
 6. A reason for using "just" as a name aggravates by contrast the wickedness of these murderers.

7. It is scriptural to call saints “the just” (Job 27:17; Ps 7:9; 37:12; Prov 3:33; 4:18; 10:6-7,20,31; 11:9; 12:13,21; 13:22; 17:15,26; 20:7; 21:15; 29:10,27; Isaiah 26:7; 29:21; Lam 4:13; Hosea 14:9; Amos 5:12; Matt 5:45; 13:49; Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38).
- D. The present tense lack of resistance is God’s temporary silence at the murderous rich (Ps 50:16-22), but the Lord of Sabaoth was coming with His mighty angels to destroy them (II Thess 1:3-10).

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.*

- A. James exhorted the brethren to *patience* - endure affliction and suffering by waiting for the Lord.
 1. He had opened the epistle by exhorting to patience in light of its spiritual value (1:2-4).
 2. Now he exhorted to patience in light of the coming of the Lord to rescue them (5:4,7-8).
- B. The *therefore* is important, as it indicates the nature of the preceding verses against their enemies.
 1. The Lord of Sabaoth had heard the oppressed, and He was coming to deliver them (5:4).
 2. The content of 5:1-6 is negative with judgment, so it must be to enemies of the brethren.
- C. The coming of the Lord is His Second Coming, as we understand from II Thessalonians 1:3-10.
 1. It is this event that believing Jews and Gentiles wait for with joyful expectation (Job 19:25-27; Matt 25:31; I Cor 1:7; 15:19; I Thess 2:19; 3:13; II Thess 3:4; I Tim 6:13-16; II Tim 4:1,8; Titus 3:13; Heb 9:28; I Pet 1:7; I John 3:1-3).
 2. Peter addressed the same audience, and he wrote of the Second Coming (I Pet 1:1-21).
- D. Farmers labor with difficulty to get a crop in the ground, and then they must wait for the reward.
 1. The ground must be tilled, the seeds planted, weeds and insects kept back, and so forth.
 2. Then they must wait the whole long summer in order to harvest useable fruit in the fall.
 3. He waits on God for early rain - “April showers bring May flowers” - to open the seeds.
 4. He waits on god for later rain that finishes and hydrates the plants (Deut 11:14; Job 29:23; Prov 16:15; Jer 3:3; 5:24; Hos 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zech 10:1).
 5. Saints are to wait as patiently, trusting the Lord of the harvest to eventually come for us.

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

- A. The *also* indicates two patient parties - the farmer waiting for the latter rain, and the brethren (5:7).
 1. The farmer has long patience through summer before realizing the reward of labor in the spring.
 2. The afflicted and suffering brethren were to likewise be patient for a reward coming with Christ.
- B. Hearts are established by faith, which believes the promises without fainting (Ps 27:14; I Cor 15:58).
- C. How is it correct to say that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ drew nigh during the first century?
 1. We do not see the Lord coming in judgment on Jerusalem, for that did not relieve scattered Jews.
 2. It comes as a thief in the night, which has kept generations of true saints sober (II Peter 3:9-11).
 3. The time of the Second Coming was not known, and it took II Thess 2:1-3 to give it some space.
 4. When Paul said it was not at hand, he meant to protect saints from anxiety (II Thess 2:1-2; 3:11).
 5. The Lord Jesus closed the book of Revelation by saying He would come quickly (Rev 22:20).
 6. The Lord’s timing is not our timing – we should always live in light of His coming (II Pet 3:8).
 7. If the Lord’s coming motivated them, how much more to us on the other side of the Man of Sin?

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

- A. In light of the Lord's Second Coming, believers should live in peace and unity to avoid judgment.
- B. Though the Lord Christ was at the door of Jerusalem, that was not the time for judging grudging!
- C. Grudges against a brother are categorically rejected by the command to love neighbors (Lev 19:18).
- D. Hospitality, which is a duty of all saints, should never be done grudgingly by any (I Peter 4:9).

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

- A. If prophets, who were commissioned by heaven as God's ambassadors, suffered, then you can also.
 - 1. Our Lord used this line of reasoning to encourage great joy under persecution (Matt 5:10-12).
 - 2. They and the Lord Jesus are a great cloud of witnesses to encourage us (Hebrews 11:32 - 12:4).
- B. God's prophets provides great examples of suffering, glorious patience, and wonderful rewards.
 - 1. The example brought forth in the context here is Job, who was indeed a prophet (Job 19:25-27).
 - 2. Enoch foretold Christ's coming! He went to heaven without death (Gen 5:21-24; Jude 1:14-15).
 - 3. Noah was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years without evangelistic results, but he was dry!
 - 4. Elijah suffered much during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel! But he went to heaven in a chariot!
 - 5. What more could we say of Micaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, John, Jesus, Stephen, Paul, and others?

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.

- A. Here is the reward for suffering! Those who endure end up happy, because they are blessed!
 - 1. Some were blessed and rewarded in this life; others were blessed and rewarded in the next.
 - 2. We know one thing for sure from the testimony of scripture and experience - those who faithfully endure are rewarded by the blessed God of heaven.
 - 3. If any accounting or audit is made of the suffering of saints, there are happy reasons to endure!
- B. Though we criticize Job, we must also remember that he endured an enormous weight of afflictions.
 - 1. If you consider all the aspects of his suffering, no other ten men have even come close to it.
 - 2. For some time he did not charge God foolishly (1:20-22), but he worshipped him instead.
 - 3. He was given long life with a double restoration of all his possessions and peace with God.
- C. We must always remember the end of the Lord – the Lord is VERY pitiful and of TENDER mercy.
 - 1. When our mother and father forsake us - two that love us most - the Lord takes us up (Ps 27:10).
 - 2. The Lord is compared to various creatures and relations to comfort and encourage us (Ex 19:4; Deut 1:31; 32:11-12; 33:27; Ruth 2:12; Ps 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 91:4; Isaiah 46:3-4; 63:9).
 - 3. What more could we say about Jacob, Joseph, David, Esther, Daniel, and others?

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.

- A. James in this verse condemned the frivolous and sinful swearing of the Jews (Mathew 23:16-22).
 - 1. The use of *above all things* is to get attention, and it is used elsewhere (I Peter 4:8; III John 1:2).
 - 2. The oaths condemned by this verse are by heaven, earth, or any other such oath used by Jews.
 - 3. The profane distinctions made by the Jews were certain to bring God's condemnation on them.
- B. Our Lord used similar language to condemn the profane practices of His countrymen (Matt 5:33-37).

- C. James did not condemn swearing in God's name – he condemned foolish swearing by other objects.
 1. It was an ordinance of God's law to swear in His name (Deut 6:13; 10:20; Psalm 63:11; Jer 4:2).
 2. God, Jesus, and Paul swore in God's name (Heb 3:11; 6:13-14; Matt 26:63-64; Rom 1:9; 9:1).
 3. The heretical Jehovah's Witnesses and Mennonites refuse to take any oaths, even in court, due to their total misunderstanding of this text and the words of our Lord in Matthew 5:33-37).
 4. It is our duty to avoid swearing by heaven – for heaven's sake! ... swearing by earth – my lands! ... or by anything else in this universe, especially bull excrement, sex acts, hell, or a holy cow.
- D. Please see the links at the bottom of this outline for extensive Bible material justifying godly oaths.

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

- A. Here is a faith-based life taught in one verse, and it is this approach to life that we should follow.
 1. When adversity or affliction strikes, we must take it to the Lord first and most (1:2-4; I Pet 5:7).
 2. If we turn difficulties over to him, perfect peace is the certain result (Isaiah 26:3-4; Phil 4:6-7).
 3. If we seek Him for wisdom in the face of adversity and temptations, He gives it liberally (1:5).
 4. We cannot let our troubles destroy us - we may be cast down, but not destroyed (II Cor 4:8-10).
 5. We cannot turn to the arm of flesh to help us, for there is no real help there (Ps 118:8; 146:3-10).
 6. When joy or prosperity rise, we praise and thank Him first and most (Psalm 50:15; I Thess 5:18).
 7. We cannot let victories seduce us to pride, lethargy, or lasciviousness (Deut 32:15; Prov 30:7-9).
 8. The goodness of God should lead us to repentance, not to foolishness (Isaiah 5:1-6; Rom 2:4).
- B. One of the most damnable aspects of Hollywood and all worldly history and entertainments is their categorical and committed rejection of this approach to life.
 1. Prayer is never the solution to affliction, pain, or trouble. Instead, they pursue natural remedies.
 2. Praise is never the response to blessing and success. Instead, they pursue natural celebrating.

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:

- E. All men get sick at one time or another, and here is apostolic advice for miraculous healing.
- F. There was a time when miraculous healing was part of the New Testament churches.
 1. Taking up serpents and miraculous healing were first given to confirm Moses (Ex 4:1-8).
 2. Jesus Christ commissioned His apostles and their followers to heal (Mark 16:17-20).
 3. Healing gifts included the apostles and immediate hearers (Acts 6:8; 8:6; I Cor 12:9,28).
 4. The sign gifts were given primarily for the Jews (Mat 12:38; 16:1; John 2:18; I Cor 1:22).
 5. There is not a word to Timothy or Titus to heal, but there is a home remedy (I Tim 5:23)!
- G. These sign gifts, including healing, were to go away after the time of reformation (Heb 9:10).
 1. God had prophesied marvelous things in the Messiah's era for 40 years (Micah 7:14-17).
 2. The revelatory gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge also ended (I Cor 13:8-10).
 3. Early on, Peter had healed by his shadow and Paul by handkerchiefs (Acts 5:15; 19:12).
 4. Later, Paul could not heal even his closest ministerial friends (I Tim 5:23; II Tim 4:20).
- H. Who are the *elders of the church*? Those God-called men in positions of spiritual authority.
 1. The term "elder" is used with very wide latitude in both testaments of God's scripture.
 2. It included men in the latter half of life, who deserved respect of the younger (I Pet 5:5).
 3. It is not a term for a specific office, but rather a general term for men in various offices.
 4. The term appears to include every church officer from apostle to deacon (I Peter 5:1).
 5. The only offices we know of for today are bishops and deacons (Phil 1:1; Tim 3:1,8).
 6. The gradations of power were very real to exalt the apostles (Acts 5:12-13; 8:14-17).
 7. Remember that the deacons Stephen and Philip were able to do miracles (Acts 6:8; 8:6).

8. Consider Peter the elder sent for by the saints at Lydda to heal Dorcas (Acts 9:36-42).
- I. What is *praying over the sick*? Is it the same as praying for the sick, or something different?
 1. This is very different from instructions to pray for someone (I Tim 2:1-2; I Thess 5:25).
 2. You can only pray over a person, if you are there with them and are above them in some special way (I Kgs 17:21; II Kgs 4:33; 5:11; Acts 20:10).
 3. It was not uncommon in apostolic healing to lay hands on a sick person (Acts 9:17; 28:8).
 4. This kind of praying is distinguished from the prayer *one for another* coming next (5:16).
 5. All prayer requires faith, but this is a prayer of faith (5:15), so it must be a gift of faith for a miraculous healing by prayer (I Cor 12:9; 13:2).
- J. What is *anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord*? It was a token for a healing miracle.
 1. Consider how the Lord Christ twice healed blindness with spit (Mark 8:23; John 9:6).
 2. The anointing oil for healing was a special token given to the apostles (Mark 6:13).
 3. It has no basis at all to a Roman Catholic heresy of anointing with oil in Extreme Unction.

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.

- A. The *prayer of faith* is a single prayer by the gift of faith to produce a miraculous healing.
 1. The gift of faith is closely associated with miracles (I Cor 12:9; 13:2; Acts 6:5,8).
 2. Consider Peter the elder sent for by the saints at Lydda to heal Dorcas (Acts 9:36-42).
 3. All prayer requires faith, so this particular prayer must be by extraordinary faith.
- B. Observe that this prayer of faith *shall save the sick* without any possibility of failure.
 1. Cases where anointing of oil has been used without results prove its passing away.
 2. There are three clear promises in this passage as indicated by the future tense “shall.”
 3. The description of these two verses is that of a certain miracle by the power of God.
- C. Sin causes some sicknesses by God’s chastening, and God forgave them by this prayer.
 1. God chastens men with sickness to get their attention (I Corinthians 11:30; John 9:2).
 2. The last half of the verse does not imply in any way that some men do not sin.

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.

- A. Leaving the extraordinary use of prayer and anointing oil, James took up ordinary prayer.
 1. The previous two verses taught miraculous healing by apostolic oil and a prayer of faith.
 2. Now the apostle teaches saints to settle differences and pray for each other for healing.
 3. Since we no longer have the option for miraculous healing, we resort to ordinary prayer.
 4. Even without apostles or miracle-working elders, righteous men can avail much in prayer.
- B. Confession of small sins against men and praying for each other will also lift chastening.
 1. *Confessing your faults* one to another must generally be small sins of personal offences, for the Bible teaches nowhere to confess large sins to men (I Sam 2:25; I Cor 6:1-8).
 2. The confession is *one to another*, not one person to most or all of the whole church!
 3. Large sins against God are rightly confessed directly to Him (Psalm 51:4; I John 1:9).
 4. The first half of this verse creates no basis at all for Rome’s confession of sins to priests.
 5. Note how Jesus taught confession of faults was necessary for worship (Matt 5:23-26).
 6. He also taught to forgive confessions of faults, proving their existence (Matt 18:15-17,21-22).
 7. Peter declared that a strained husband-wife relationship would hinder prayers (I Peter 3:7).
 8. And fathers must be reconciled to their sons to be a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:17).

9. While confessing burdensome sins against God on occasion to spiritual brothers or sisters in the church for prayer would have a place and profit, this is not the best sense for here.
- C. One of the most concise and grandest statements about prayer is found in this text in James.
- D. An *effectual prayer* is an effective one producing its intended effect by praying wisely.
 1. Prayer is an art that is taught: there are effective and ineffective ways to pray (Luk 11:1).
 2. What is called the Lord's Prayer was Jesus teaching disciples how to pray (Matt 6:9-13).
 3. The Bible is full of rules for effective praying, if time is invested to find and study them.
- E. A *fervent prayer* is an ardent one made with intense earnestness and very serious passion.
 1. The example of Elijah praying earnestly in context is a definition and synonym for this word.
 2. Consider how the Lord Jesus Christ prayed more earnestly in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44).
 3. Our Lord explained that some devils require prayer with fasting (Matthew 17:21).
 4. Jacob was fearful of meeting Esau, and he wrestled passionately all night (Ex 32:24).
- F. A *righteous man* is one who has his prayers heard and answered by the God of heaven.
 1. The Bible repeatedly honors the righteous man with having God's ear (Ps 34:15,17).
 2. Compromisers and hypocrites do not have their prayers heard (Ps 66:18; Is 59:1-2).
 3. In case you are worried that you are not righteous enough, Elijah is the example below!
 4. And if you consider the answers to prayers in the psalms, remember David and his sins!
 5. If you confess your sins, repent of them, and forsake them, you can start over with God.
- G. Prayer *avails much*, as the testimony of scripture shows clearly by numerous examples.
 1. Do you wish to think of Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, Hannah, Jehoshaphat, or Elisha?
 2. You can do more in any matter by praying than you can by any other personal effort.

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.

- A. In case you worry you are not righteous enough to pray, God gives the example of Elijah.
 1. Consider how the Holy Spirit declared Elijah to have been moved by passions like us!
 2. Peter and Paul persuaded men they also were similar in passion (Acts 10:26; 14:15).
 3. And you can read about the event, which shows his human weakness (I Kings 19:1-4).
 4. The Bible is given to comfort (Rom 15:4) ... Samson made the Hall of Faith (Heb 11:32)!
- B. Elijah prayed earnestly ... fervently in the verse before, and God answered him powerfully.
- C. How effectual was this passionate man's earnest praying? He stopped the rain for 3.5 years!

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

- A. When it was time for rain again, God heard Elijah's prayer and sent rain to bring forth fruit.
- B. The Lord enabled him to outrun Ahab's chariot to Jezreel to beat the storm (I Kgs 18:41-46).
- C. How can you ever be discouraged with any circumstances, since you have the option of prayer!

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

- A. Here is the most detailed and specific verse describing soul winning in the whole Bible.
- B. It must be observed very strictly that this verse is addressed to *brethren*, James's audience.
 1. He already declared these beloved brethren were born again and justified (1:18; 2:1,5,14).
 2. The conditional statement on which the lesson is taught is brethren erring from the truth.
 3. This is on-on-one work of restoring individual church members back to the truth of God.

- C. Brethren can *err from the truth*, as they did on many points of doctrine in many churches.
 - 1. These brethren had been taught the truth and were in the truth, but they could *err from it*!
 - 2. Consider how many doctrinal and practical heresies existed at just Corinth and in Galatia.
 - 3. Paul taught the saints at Thessalonica to warn any unruly among them (I Thess 5:14).
 - 4. It is a common occurrence of saints getting confused or disorderly in doctrine or practice.
 - 5. Erring from the truth is sin by leaving Bible doctrine or practice, for he is a sinner (5:20).
- D. Conversion is turning a person from one bad form of belief or conduct to another that is right.
 - 1. When we convert things, like electricity, we change them into much more useful forms.
 - 2. When a person is converted, he changes from one form of belief or activity to another.
 - 3. Conversion sees, hears, understands, and repents; and then God forgives the new converts of their past sins and wicked lives (Isaiah 6:10; Mark 4:12; John 12:40; Acts 3:19; 28:27).
 - 4. Conversion is not regeneration, no matter who may say so. God regenerates by creating our hearts anew, and we convert by changing our lifestyle to match the written word of God.
 - 5. Peter fearfully denied Jesus Christ and needed conversion back to Him (Luke 22:31-32).
 - 6. The kingdom of heaven requires that we change and become as little children (Mat 18:3).
 - 7. David intended to teach transgressors God's ways and convert sinners to Him (Ps 51:13).
 - 8. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul – teaching truth and wisdom (Ps 19:7).
 - 9. Conversion is also restoration when recovering those erring from the truth (Gal 6:1-2).
 - 10. Paul and Barnabas witnessed to churches about the conversion of Gentiles (Acts 15:3).
 - 11. God regenerated Cornelius, but Peter converted him, and we must keep these separate!
- E. There is not a single verse in any general epistle even hinting at saving men's souls from hell.
 - 1. If this were the primary duty of saints, as many declare it to be, why such a great silence?
 - 2. The apostles fulfilled the Great Commission, and it was not repeated to any church at all.
- F. But there are many scriptures converting men back to righteousness and truth (I Thess 5:14; Psalm 141:5; Prov 27:5-6; Job 33:12-13; I Sam 25:32-35).

20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

- A. The one brother who turns one erring brother from his folly has done a great service and work.
- B. This is real *soul winning* – teaching a person truth and wisdom in order to please the Lord.
 - 1. Solomon described this as being a tree of life to others (Pr 3:18; 11:30; 15:4,31; 25:12).
 - 2. Aquila and Priscilla taught Apollos the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:24-26).
 - 3. God has a blessing for those wise men who turn others to righteousness (Daniel 12:3).
 - 4. This soul winning work of restoration is done by brothers for brothers (Galatians 6:1-2).
- C. Such soul winners can *save souls from death* by converting them back to truth and wisdom.
 - 1. There is death to fellowship with God by sin disrupting it (I Tim 5:6 cp Luke 15:24,32).
 - 2. There is death to joyful and victorious Christian living by sin (Ephesians 5:14; Rev 3:1).
 - 3. There is remaining in the congregation of the dead by losing understanding (Prov 21:16).
 - 4. There is physical death that occurs by God's chastening for sin (I Cor 11:30; Prov 13:14).
 - 5. They do not save souls from the second death, for only Jesus does that (Rev 13:8; 20:6).
- D. Soul winners can *hide a multitude of sins* by converting sinners back to truth and wisdom.
 - 1. Unless sinners are stopped in their sinful ways, they heap up sins before God and men.
 - 2. When a man repents of his sins by wise counsel from a soul winner, God forgives Him and hides his sins under the blood (Ps 103:12; Isaiah 38:17; 43:25; Jer 50:20; Micah 7:19).
 - 3. When God forgives sins, He covers them under His mercy from His judgment (Ps 32:1).
 - 4. Though our sins might be red as scarlet, they can be made as white as wool (Isaiah 1:18).

5. Spiritual brothers restore sinning brothers by covering their sins as well, as repentance and God's forgiveness clears any man from any sin (Galatians 6:1; II Corinthians 7:11).
6. Repentance and God's forgiveness are wonderful things, for they hide one sin or a multitude of sins from God's judgment and public view (I Pet 4:8; Pr 10:12; 17:9; 19:11).

Conclusion:

1. You were warned in chapter 1 against being a hearer and not a doer of God's word. Then obey this chapter!
2. As in many of Paul's epistles, James has various short exhortations and lessons before ending the epistle.
3. It is a shame that we have never known or seen real persecution or suffering for the gospel's sake, because we will not appreciate the prophecy of judgment in 5:1-6 and the comfort of patience in 5:7-11 as we should.
4. This final chapter ends commending those who convert others back to the way of truth taught here (5:19-20).

For Further Study:

1. The sermon outline, "Charismatic Religion," explains how, why, and when the miracles of the New Testament ended.
2. The sermon outline, "Swearing and Oaths," proves Jesus condemned profane Jewish swearing but not proper swearing.
3. The sermon outline, "Sermon on the Mount," proves Jesus condemned profane Jewish swearing but not proper swearing.
4. The sermon outline, "Prayer Is a Priority," covers the value and power of prayer for average children of God.
5. The sermon outline, "Effectual Prayer," is a detailed review of the whole subject of prayer and its related rules.
6. The sermon outline, "Regeneration and Conversion," rightly divides God's work in regeneration and ours in conversion.
7. The sermon outline, "Church Discipline," deals extensively with repentance, forgiveness, conversion, and covering sins.