

Epistle of James - Part 5

by John Hunter

In this sermon, John Hunter explores the themes of judgment against the rich, the call for patience in suffering, the importance of integrity in speech, and the power of prayer in healing and restoration.

Duration: 1:00:55

Scripture: James 5

Topics: "James"

Description

In this sermon on James chapter 5 verses 1 to 6, the preacher discusses the judgment upon the ungodly rich. He emphasizes that the wealthy should weep and howl for their impending miseries. The preacher condemns the hoarding of wealth, dishonesty, self-indulgence, and persecution of Christians as sins committed by the rich. He assures the suffering individuals that there will be a day of judgment for these unrighteous actions. The sermon draws from biblical references and highlights the importance of righteousness and equity between employers and employees.

Transcript

James, chapter 5, verses 1 to 6, the judgment upon the ungodly rich, strange subject, isn't it? Verses 7 to 11, the coming of the Lord. Verse 12, the taking of an oath. And then finally, verses 13 to 18, the prayer of faith.

19 and 20, restoring a backslider. Verse 1 please, the judgment on the ungodly rich. Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. 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.

Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth. The cries of them which reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Not the Lord of Sabbath, the Lord of Sabaoth.

Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton. Ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed just, and he doth not resist you.

Verses 7 to 11, the coming of the Lord. 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.

Be also patient, establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the judge standeth before the door.

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

Verse 12, oath-taking. 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.

Verses 13 to 18, the prayer of faith. Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing.

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. 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.

Confess therefore. Take note of that, please, will you, in the reading, taking advantage of critical translations. Note the word therefore should be inserted.

Confess therefore your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 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. And he prayed again.

And the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. The prayer of faith. 19 and 20, the restoration of a backslider.

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, 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. Back now to the opening of the chapter. In verses one to six, James, something like an Old Testament prophet, is pronouncing woe and judgment upon the ungodly wealthy employers.

You might wonder why it is that suddenly James should start to address the ungodly. For all through he's been speaking to Christians as beloved, my beloved brethren, and so forth. Well, of course, James condemns these men, pronounces judgment, because he wants to bring comfort to the hearts of those who are suffering from them.

And so he assures them, now there's a day of judgment coming for all such. Let me divide it for you. In verses one to three, in relation to these men, he speaks about the sin of hoarding money.

The sin of hoarding wealth. Here, of course, it's both goods and money. In verse four, he speaks about the sin of dishonesty.

Verse five, the sin of self-indulgence. Verse six, the sin of persecuting the Christians. Come again.

You will notice, please, that in his condemnation, in verses two and three, he draws attention to the sources of their wealth. He says in verse one that your riches are corrupting. He's referring to corn and grain stowed up in the barns.

He refers in verse two to garments, and in verse three to gold and silver. Now, you might think it strange that in that day garments were looked upon as part of wealth, but they were. You always knew a wealthy person by the amount of garments that they possessed.

For instance, when Joseph sent away his brethren, he gave them each a change of garments, but he gave Benjamin five changes. You will remember in Joshua 7 that Achan coveted, amongst the gold and silver, the goodly Babylonian garment, the mantle from Shinar. You will recall that Samson promised to those who would answer his riddle thirty changes of garment.

You will remember in 2 Kings 5 that Naaman took ten changes of raiment when he went to interview the king. And you will recall as far forward as Paul. In Acts 20, he said to the elders of Ephesus, I have coveted no man's silver nor apparel.

He says, I don't covet your money, and I don't covet your wardrobe. So you will understand that in those days garments were all part of wealth. And the sin of these men were that they were hoarding up their wealth.

Says James at the close of verse 3, You have heaped treasure in the last days. That is, the days of judgment are coming, and yet you're heaping up your wealth, thinking that that's everything. Let me talk to you Christians for a moment, please.

For at times I get worried about you. I get worried about your money. Not that I'm wanting it to be put in the will.

Don't misunderstand me. But you know God has been very good to most of you. We'll all admit, far kinder and gracious than any of us deserve.

But you know, the Lord's coming. And if he came tonight, you're leaving it all behind you. You're going away.

You're not coming back. What you have acquired is but luggage along the road. You can suit yourself whether you leave it to a lot of ungodly relatives or not.

That's your business. I reckon nobody will account for that. Leaving money to ungodly people who'll only squander what God gave you as a trust and stewardship.

But that's your business. Sometimes I would notice over there, in our country, that property would be advertised. Then in the small writing at the foot, it says, Owner going away.

So obviously the message is clear. He's going away and he wants to sell his property and get into currency that will be valid where he's going. Got that? So you and I are going away.

Have you done what Paul has told you to do? That they do good. That they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come. What Paul is saying is there is this.

Use your money to get the benefit when you get to the glory. Get it into circulation now. So that you'll meet it up there in that day.

So there it is. And he is thundering against these ungodly men who thought that wealth, riches and goods were everything in life. Brethren, a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he possesseth.

So let's put them in their right place. Look at verse 4. He now speaks of the dishonesty of these employers. You'll notice that he talks about them.

He says that the wages of the laborers who reap down your fields you've kept back by fraud. And these wages are crying out. Isn't that right? The wages cry.

And he says the workers are crying out. The cries of them that reaped, that did the work are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Now this is interesting.

You see, long before there were socialists and communists there's a social passion that blazes its way through the Bible that demands that employers be righteous. That demands that there be equity between employer and employee. Now according to Matthew 20 and your Old Testament a man, a person worked and was paid at the close of each day.

Leviticus 19 verse 13 says You must not hold up the wages of the laborer overnight for he's poor and he needs the money. And this is what they were doing. They were holding back the wages that belonged to the workers.

And he says the wages are crying out. And he says the workers are crying out and it's entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Not the Lord of Sabbath.

The Lord of Sabaoth is the Lord of hosts. Strange that our authorized version translator shouldn't translate it the Lord of hosts. The reason for that is this.

They were quoting from the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the Greek version of the Old Testament scriptures. And the translators in the Septuagint left the word in its Hebrew form.

Lord of Sabaoth. So our authorized version translators just followed them and did the same. That's all.

You'll get it the same over in Romans. It's the Lord of hosts. What he's saying is this.

Don't you recognize that the cries of the downtrodden are entering into the ears of the Lord of hosts. He will be their helper and he will be their avenger. He will vindicate the poor in a coming day.

The Lord of hosts. He will listen. Good to remember that.

Pour your complaint into the ear of the mighty God of hosts who has power to deal with your problem. Verse 5. These employers as so often while they starved the workers and held up their wages they themselves were living in pleasure and wanton. They were living self-indulgent voluptuous lives spending their money on their own pleasure.

Says James at the close of verse 5 You have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter. He likens them to cattle being fattened for the slaughterhouse. Verse 6. He says you men have condemned and killed the righteous and he doth not resist you.

And he's showing how unscrupulous these men were especially against the godly. And so he tells them to commit their case to the Lord of hosts. Now come now to verses 7 to 11.

He introduces the coming of the Lord. Now in this early day James is not going to tell us what's going to take place at the coming. What James is saying is this in the midst of all your problems in the midst of all your difficulties have patience for the Lord's coming.

Now that's interesting. You see this was a blatant social evil. And in the Lord's day and Paul's day slavery was a common thing.

Slavery was a terrible thing. But you know the Lord didn't become a politician to shout for the abolition of slavery. And Paul didn't become a politician to take part in political effort to change the world.

Oh no. And you're not expected to be a politician. For if the Lord wasn't one and Paul wasn't one you shouldn't be one.

All you're asked to do is to submit to the government that God puts in office. You'll do far more far more in the sanctuary of God speaking intelligently to God about these things than in a polling booth. Again.

Now he says brethren be patient. Now he gives three illustrations. Verse 7 the farmer.

Verse 10 the prophets. Verse 11 Job. In verse 7 now he says you take the farmer.

He waits patiently for the fruit. He has long patience till he receives the early rain that comes after the sowing and the latter rain that comes just as the grain is ripening to fatten it for a rich crop. So that the farmer waits patiently.

Be you also patient brethren establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. That is be patient in the midst of all your suffering and affliction. Now of course standing here in South Main Street in Vancouver talking like this doesn't impress you too much.

The reason for that being of course that we don't know very much about suffering. If I was addressing some of the underground church over yonder in some of the eastern lands you'll notice what I said. If I was addressing not some of the assemblies where they have a government representative and meet publicly.

That's not the underground church. That's the church on top of the ground that accepts government intervention. Now I'm not passing judgment on them.

I'm only telling you the facts. You need to live there to make up your mind. But there is an underground church that meets privately and secretly that will come together for a meeting over a period of two hours two and three at a time not to draw attention.

If I was talking to them tonight about suffering they would understand. I never can understand brethren and sisters why the Lord doesn't count as worthy to suffer more. I don't understand that.

Maybe we couldn't take it with so long soft living. But there it is. And in verse nine he draws attention sometimes that when people are ground down and they're suffering greatly that they get frustrated they're helpless and so they turn on each other to complain and moan.

Grudge not. Moan not. Complain not.

One against another brethren because the judge is standing at the door. Remember verse ten. Now I'm going over it quickly because I know that you all want me to get to the end of the chapter.

When you get to verse ten he's saying now brethren listen. You take the example of the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord an example of suffering affliction and of patience that is. All these prophets that you read about mostly you would think of Jeremiah but you know they all suffered in their own way.

Suffered tremendously. Imagine a God giving a prophet years of ministry and telling him before he started they'll reject your ministry anyway. That's not easy is it? But on he went.

And so he moves then from the prophets verse eleven to job. You have heard of the endurance of job. That right? We count them happy which endure.

That's right as long as it's the other one. Not us. And he introduces us and tells us something about the experience of this man that job never knew.

He said all the time that job was going through this the Lord was very pitiful and of tender mercy. The Lord was feeling for the man and feeling deeply for him in the welter of suffering that God caused him to pass through. Remember that.

The heart of the eternal is wonderfully kind. Now please verse twelve. Let's come to what is called here swearing or the taking of an oath.

You will notice please what James says. My brethren swear not neither by heaven nor earth nor by any other oath let your yea be yea and your yea nay nay. Now when the Lord taught on the sermon on the mount he taught that just nearly word for word what James is saying.

Maybe James is quoting. He says I say unto you said the Lord Jesus swear not at all neither by heaven for it is God's footstool nor by earth for heaven it is God's throne nor by earth for it is his footstool nor by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great king but let your yea be yea and your nay nay. Now brethren let me get one thing perfectly clear here.

Neither the Lord Jesus nor James is talking about the taking of an oath in a law court. That's not in view at all. What he has in view was that the Jews in that day were using a multiplicity of oaths in order to try and impress people by what they were saying.

For instance you can see this if you go to Matthew 23 and the Lord's teaching about swearing about taking an oath. He says this Ye blind guides you say whosoever shall swear by the temple it is nothing that is he's not held to his oath but if he swears by the gold of the temple he's a debtor to keep his word. Fools and blind which is greater the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold.

Again he says someone says if you swear by the altar it's nothing you're not held to your word but if you swear by the gift on the altar then you're held to it which is greater the altar or the gift the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift you see. What they were doing was this they were swearing by anything other than the name of God. Now an oath only has power and effect when it's used sparingly.

If you're always as they did everything they said they were swearing by an oath then the thing loses its value. Of course it's interesting this you know if you were going back to your Bible in Deuteronomy you

would find that God told them to swear by his own name. You will find that the Lord Jesus was silent until they put him on oath and then he responded.

You will find in Hebrews 6 that God could swear by no greater swear by himself than by two things his word and his oath two immutable things. So that you will understand that it's not a question of what you do when you go to a locor. Now I don't know about the law here.

In Britain you're allowed to a firm. You're allowed to do that here in a locor? See? And it's up to you to make up your mind whether when you face a magistrate or a judge who has never seen you before that he should take into account that you're a man or a woman of extreme godliness and righteousness that you don't need to swear. Mostly the idea of swearing or affirming is to bring you under the law of perjury.

What James and the Lord is teaching is this that when we give our word it's our bond. You see brethren if I promised you anything then you accept my word. I can assure you it's my bond.

You don't need it in writing. And if you would promise me anything I should be able to accept that 100%. We are men and women of integrity and of righteousness.

We're straight up and down. You can believe all that's said. That's what he's teaching there.

Now let's come now to verse 13 to the prayer of faith. As you come forward to the passage now drop your eye now please will you? You will notice in verse 13 that it is the saint who is praying. Is that right? When you come to verse 14 it's the elders that are praying.

When you come to verse 16 you're praying one for another. And when you come to verse 17 and 18 it's Elijah the prophet that's praying. Is that right? So here you have four people praying.

Now come again. In verse 13 if you're afflicted you pray, if you're merry you sing. That is if you're in deep trouble you'll pray.

If everything's going well and you're happy you'll probably sing. And in these two extremes of affliction or suffering trouble and happiness you have got the extent of living. Life is generally made up of things going well and going not so well.

And each of these occasions enable you to pray or to sing. So that it covers everything there just in life. And you're enabled to speak to God and to sing to God.

Now come now to verse 14. Now you'll need to follow me very carefully here please. Because we are now going to deal with this prayer of faith that saves the sick.

You will understand that it's my business to teach you this in context. Before I begin let me say this. I firmly believe that God can heal today.

He wouldn't be God if he couldn't. And I have known many cases of believers who have been wonderfully healed. And could produce x-rays to prove all kinds of trouble including cancer.

And they have been miraculously healed. I want to say this to you. Whenever you meet people like that just believe them.

You can't deny the sight of your eyes or the medical records. God can do that. The medical profession is beginning to come around a little to realize something of the value of prayer.

So we've got that clear. Sovereignly God can heal. But I'll show in a moment or two it's not the general thing.

Now come again. Verse 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.

Now this is interesting. Here is a person that takes sick. Now tell me.

Why didn't James say call for the doctor? That would be the wisest thing to do wouldn't it? Call for the doctor. No he doesn't say that. Now you'll just hold that.

Now there could have been problems. Could have been problems. Because when a Jew got converted the Jewish doctor wouldn't likely attend him.

And he wouldn't go to pagan physicians who were linked up with evil spirits in the pagan temple. So he could have a problem about getting a doctor. But James doesn't mention a doctor at all.

Now that's significant. Number two. You will notice he doesn't say send for an apostle.

They were alive in those days. Well you might say quite legitimately well now. There might have been none of them around.

They could have been away in a far off place. Good enough. But he doesn't say send for an apostle.

Come again. Remarkable that James doesn't say send for the brother with the gift of healing. Because it was a common gift.

There was any amount of people there with the gift of healing. Why didn't James say send for the brother with the gift of healing? Now that would indicate to you that James has something particular in mind. You see it never was God's mind that all sickness should be healed.

For instance Paul had a thorn in the flesh. I take it it was physical. He asked the Lord to take it away and the Lord refused and that finished the matter.

Paul never prayed and anointed or laid his hands on Timothy to cure his weak stomach. When Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death, Philippians 2 yonder in Rome, Paul never sought to heal him. He nearly died.

Do you remember in 2 Timothy 4 Paul says, Trophimus have I left at my litum sick? And he didn't endeavor to heal him. Now all these things are interesting. Now come again.

When James gives advice, strange he says to them call for the elders of the church. But the elders as a body had never been given the gift of healing. Now that's interesting.

The very fact that they hadn't been given the gift of healing and he eliminates doctors and apostles and those who had the gift of healing but sent for the elders would tell you that the root of this is a spiritual problem. It's a problem that the elders alone can deal with. Send for them.

They are the so to speak the spiritual healers. There's something here that demands that the elders come. The truth of the matter is this, that it was sin that had laid the man on his back.

Now let us gather up the evidence please will you? Now look now please will you? Verse 15 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. Now notice the introduction of sins. Now please brethren, the presence of the if does not necessarily throw doubt on the matter.

Got that? Would it interest you to know, I'll read it to you. Would it interest you to know that the same word translated if here three times in John's gospel is translated though and though he have committed sins. Listen carefully.

The pharisees in John 8 said to the Lord, Thou barest record of thyself, thy record is not true. The Lord Jesus answered and said unto them Though I bear record of myself, even if I bear record of myself. Now he wasn't denying that he bore record of himself, he did bear record of himself.

They could have put an if there, it wouldn't have altered the sense of the fact that the Lord did bear record of himself. John 10 verse 38 If I do not the works of my Father believe me not, but if I do them, though you believe not me. Now he wasn't if you believe not me but they didn't believe him.

The word if there doesn't suggest doubt at all. It establishes even if you don't believe me. Again you know this one well.

John 11 verse 25 I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead. If he were dead, yet shall he live.

The Lord is taking into account the fact that people would be dead though they were dead. So you come here and though he have committed sins they shall be forgiven. Sins is at the root of this trouble.

Come again now please. Verse 15 16 sorry Confess therefore your faults. The word therefore suggests that the man confessed his sins to the elders.

The word therefore throws you back to the previous verses. Again verse 17. Now you good men and women listen.

Verse 17 Now I've shown from 15 the background of sins. I've shown from 16 confess therefore that the man confessed to the elders. Now verse 17 Why does he introduce Elijah praying? Come on brethren.

Come on. Why doesn't he introduce Moses? Why doesn't he bring forward Samuel? Why doesn't he bring forward David? Why doesn't he bring forward Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel? Why does he bring forward Elijah praying? The reason is this. Because Elijah was praying in relation to the government of God upon the nation because of their sin.

The rain had been withheld in government by God because the people sinned. And so James brings forward Elijah's prayer that lifted the government of God from the nation in a day that they sinned. So all these verses in the context prove that the man lying there has sinned.

Now just a minute. Lying there it comes home to him that he's on his back because of his sin, whatever it may have been. I don't know whether you've ever met anyone like that or not.

I remember once very shortly after I arrived in Kilmarnock I went along to visit a sister who was ill. I didn't know her very well, just being new. When I got there and got inside and into the bedroom, she was there.

Oh she was quite tiny, quite tiny really. And speaking to her, she said to me Mr Hunter I'm suffering because of certain sins in my early life. I accepted her word, I couldn't do anything else.

I didn't know anything about her at all. There are people like that. Now, this man has sinned.

And on his back he recalls it all. And he's sent for the elders of the church to come to his home. So this is not a faith healing meeting.

This is not a meeting held publicly where all can come and come forward, we'll pray for you. The Lord may heal you and if he doesn't, you haven't got faith. Oh no, this is not a public meeting, this is a private meeting, in a home.

By a man who's sent privately for the elders to come. Now, when the elders came, according to verse 16, confess therefore when the elders came, he confessed his sin. And the Bible says that they will pray over him, anointing him with oil.

Now, I think now, if I remember right, I haven't got my revised version with me. The revised version margin. Let them pray over him, having anointed him with oil.

So they anointed him with oil and then they prayed. Now, this is interesting. No laying on of hands.

That right? Do you remember when the Lord sent out the 12 2 by 2 Mark 6 verse 13 and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them. That right? No laying on of hands. When you come to Mark 16 and the Lord sending them out, do you remember the last commission? He says to them, they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

You come here and they go in. The man confesses his sin. They anoint him with oil and he prays, or they pray.

Now, you'll notice, please, it's the elders that's praying. There's nothing said about the man's faith, except that he has confessed his sin to them. Anointing with oil, well that seemed to be the usual thing.

The Good Samaritan anointed with oil, didn't he? For cleansing. I think the idea is this. You see, when you read the Gospels, you'll find this.

That if the Lord will come to a blind man he'll touch his eyes. If he comes to a deaf man, he'll put his finger in his ears. Now, I think all that was done to raise the expectation of the man that something was going to happen.

And so they came here and they poured oil upon the man. Matters not what the complaint was. It would be cleansing.

It wouldn't heal any internal trouble. But they poured oil upon him. Anointed him with oil.

Now, watch now. And they prayed. And, now, careful now, please.

Because I'm trying to save you from all the commentators and the expositors. I know that sounds very proud of me. But you'll get what I mean immediately.

The prayer of faith shall save the sick. The Lord shall raise him up. So here's a case in which the man sends, confesses his sin.

They anoint him and they pray. And the man is raised up and healed. And the sins that caused it are forgiven.

It's the same idea as Mark 2 with the paralytic. Whether is it easier to say to thee thy sins be forgiven thee. Or to say, rise, take up thy bed and walk.

But that thou mayest know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins. Rise, take up thy bed and walk. And the fact that he rose was the proof that sins were forgiven.

Now, notice carefully please. Notice that the prayer of faith saves the sick. The Lord raises them up.

There's no doubt about it. This man will rise. Now, I warned you against the commentators and the expositors and the scholars for this reason.

When you turn to get help on a passage like this, they all take it up in a general way. They all then say, well, of course, you know, in the context of prayer you always pray in the will of God. If it's God's will, he'll be raised.

That's not the position here. There's no question of it being God's will. Whether he's raised or not.

It's the will of God here that this man will get up. The prayer of faith shall save the sick. The Lord shall raise them up.

His sins shall be forgiven. Now, this is interesting. You see, this goes to prove by what I've said later from the context about sins and confession and Elijah praying, along with this goes to prove that James 5 is exceptional, not general.

It doesn't mean that every time you're sick you send for the elders. It doesn't mean that. It's an exceptional case.

You see, that must be clear to you, brethren and sisters, isn't it? For instance, supposing somebody here in South Main took sick. They read James 5 and they sent for the elders. They said, there it is.

If this was general, brethren, it means this. That every time you took sick, you would just send for the elders, they would anoint you and pray and you'd be up. Nobody would ever die, unless you were knocked down by a bus.

Isn't that right? Can't you see the folly of making it general? Of applying it to every form of sickness. Because that's not true. And now again, there may have been occasions when people have done this and the Lord has answered.

But he probably would have answered the prayer of anyone. If it's his will to raise them, he'll raise them. And so here you have an exceptional case.

And there's no doubt. But just a minute. We're back at Main Street again.

The doorbell rings at our brother Boyd's. Standing at the door, there's a certain sister. She says to him, you know, John's terribly ill.

He's taken bad. And we've been reading James 5. Mr. Boyd, we'd like you to come down with one of two of the elders and pray for him. The Bible says he'll be raised up.

What are you going to do? Now first of all, you'll see the value of scriptures like this being expounded in normal situations. Isn't that right? To make the saints intelligent about the meaning of a passage. Because if Mrs. Brown's standing at the door all upset, it's hardly the time Andy's starting to expound James 5 to her.

Eh? Well, what are you going to do? I mean, after all, it's a human situation. Well, all I can say to you is this. Go down.

Tell her. And when you go home, Mrs. Brown will be down. Couldn't do anything else.

But when you go down, you'll then tell them, now listen, we don't think that James 5 refers to John's situation here, but we're happy to come and pray with you. Maybe the Lord will graciously answer prayer and heal. That's all you could do.

And pray with them. Notice verse 16. Now, says James, coming away from the official thing, because after all, there could be occasions somewhere where elders are not available, but he brings it down now into a situation in which he says this.

Confess therefore your faults one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed. Ah. This is interesting.

This is arising in the ongoing fellowship with each other. And a brother sends for you, or a sister. They say, you know, lying in my back here, I'm beginning to remember certain sins.

Or they may send for you because you're the wrong brother or sister. You could have wronged them. Or they could have wronged you better.

And they're going to confess their faults to you. Now, this is a very sacred business. Isn't that right? For instance, if someone sent for you and you went along and they start to confess their faults to you, they're not expecting you to go home and tell everybody in the house.

And they're not expecting you to go around and tell everybody in the meeting and all your friends and lift the phone. Isn't that right? These are sacred things. These are secret things.

And the brother says to you, listen, brother, I'm lying here. And I remember this day my faults. And he confesses them to you and he says, pray for me, brother.

Pray for me that the Lord will heal me. Both physically and spiritually. Have you ever been in this situation? Come on, brother.

Have you ever been in this situation? Now, let me say this. Now, I don't know your experience. Some of you are longer in the road than I am.

I have never known an experience when anyone has called for the elders of the church and demanded James 5 to be carried out. Now, I've never been there. Never known it.

You may have. I haven't. Do you know anything about this private business with each other? When they will open your heart to you, having confidence in you, and you'll pray for them.

Listen, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Now, gather up. Here is power in prayer.

Is that right? Effectual prayer to accomplish something. That's why on occasions in ministry meetings, I'll ask the folks to pray at suppertime. You see, I believe that if you know God, if you have an experience of God, something will come out of the meetings.

But watch. It's the effective prayer of a righteous person. The power is based on righteousness.

Righteousness. I want to ask you, how would you feel if somebody knocked at your door and asked you to come down and pray with them? Then started to tell you, had chosen you just to open up their heart. Would you be that kind of person that people would come to? Come on, you elders.

Come on now, all you brethren. What's your experience? Do you carry the confidence of God's people? Haven't I said before? No use being an elder. They'll never come to you if they think that once they've poured out their heart to you, you're going to tell your wife when they leave the door.

This is the thing that's killing us, brethren. This lack of confidence that a man will keep inviolate. The secret things.

The power is based on righteousness and it operates. It avails much. Would that be right? Come on now.

What about your prayer life? Do you find this? Do you find that your prayer life is benefiting other people? Brethren, this is what Christianity is all about. By the way, having said that, I maybe should have said this to you. Do you know that the Roman Catholics base the confessional on this verse? Confess therefore your faults one to another.

It's on such flimsy verse, such a flimsy verse, that they base the doctrine of the auricular confession. You'll notice, you'll know in the Dewey version, the Roman Catholic Bible, that the footnotes are as authoritative as the text. So, the footnote, verse 14 says, in relation to calling the elders, because their version would likely say, call the priest.

The footnote says, to the priest of the church whom he has ordered to be called for and brought to the sick. Nothing about that there, is there? Again. Again.

Call for the elders, pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. Upon that is based the sacrament of extreme unction. In which, which is administered to the dying.

You notice in this context, the person's expected to live, but the Roman Catholics have them dying. And they say, that the priest will anoint the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the hands and the feet with consecrated oil. Forgiveness bestowed on one no longer able to make conscious confession of sins, and to receive priestly absolution.

Hardly believe that. On such flimsy verses. It's false doctrine based.

Now we're brought to Elijah. Now you'll excuse me challenging you folks about your prayer life, won't you? For God knows, I would like to make you better men and women. I'm not saying you're bad.

Listen. What about this man Elijah? Is he a supernatural? Is that right? Oh, you get certain impressions on us from the platform, don't you? Hm? Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we. What does that mean? Means this.

He inherited the same nature. He's subject to the same emotions. He's liable to the same weaknesses.

But Elijah prayed. Shut the heavens. He prayed the second time that answers to the prayer of the elders.

The rain came and God removed the governmental consequences of sin as he would do when the elders prayed for this man. Finally, please, verses 19 and 20. You will notice, you good brethren, that I declared myself in the reading that I believe that these two last verses refer to a backslider, not a sinner.

Now, there's quite a bit of controversy amongst the scholars about it. Simply because it says that you'll convert a sinner, verse 20, from the error of his way, and they say it's a sinner. I think it's a backslider.

Now, listen to what it says. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, turn him round. Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Now, here you have someone who has wandered away from the truth. Brethren, and you are going to convert him, to turn him back to where he was before. Now, would you carry that sort of exercise in your soul? Would you ever care for each other? Does it trouble you when you hear that people are not coming to meetings any more? Do you ever go out your way to try and get them back? Do you believe that God can do things? Now, come on now.

Now, I know it's touchy ground. I know that. But do you honestly believe in a God that can do things that sometimes doctors can't do and psychiatrists can't do? Now, come on.

And are you prepared to go after this person? Let him know, says James, that if you go after him and turn him back, that you've turned him from the error of his way. That you'll save a soul from death. Now, you can go back to this.

Supposing nobody had bothered this man that sent for them. The elders met together and said, well now boys, you know, it's a difficult, awkward situation. I think we'd better just ignore the request.

We would feel embarrassed if we went there. The man might have died. But if you go and do the job, the man lives.

You've saved him from death. And hide a multitude of sins means that the sins that caused it were forgiven. Mind you, it makes you think, doesn't it? Very easy to be an elder when there's not much at stake.

Now, I want you to go home and think about these things. I want you to go home and read the passage again and go down through it. I think an honest assessment will give you to recognise that the situation is special and particular, it's not common and ordinary.

But don't miss, don't miss the fact that there are men and women who have power with God. Now you've got that. Now I want to ask you something.

Would you, would you be satisfied with your Christian life? Honestly. Just stop all the activity some night for an hour and sit down. And ask yourself, now, are you really satisfied? Would you not like to be bigger and better? Now you wouldn't misunderstand me here, would you? Say, do you not get a little tired of the superficialities of brethernism? For nobody seems to look for an increase in holiness.

Nobody seems to be interested in each other. Nobody calls for anybody for help. Why don't you think about it? For you know the tragedy of life is what a man is and what he might have been.

Lord, lift me up. Let me stand by faith on heaven's table land. A higher plain than I have found.

Lord, plant my feet on higher ground. I'm pressing on the upward way. New heights I'm gaining every day.

Still singing as I onward go. That's it. God help us to rise.

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