

# James 04

by John W. Bramhall

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and obedience to God's will in resisting the devil and drawing near to God.*

**Duration:** 59:17

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:23-24, Romans 8:28, James 5:7-8, James 5:12-14, Revelation 18:15

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare", "Judgment Day"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of Christians being sober and vigilant because the devil is constantly seeking to devour them. The sermon emphasizes that Christians have three enemies: the flesh, the world, and the devil. The preacher urges believers to examine their hearts to see if these enemies are making progress or being conquered. The sermon also highlights the coming of the Lord and its consequences for the selfish, godless, and indulgent rich, who will experience judgment and misery. The preacher encourages believers to have a patient attitude, knowing that the judge stands at the door and that the coming of the Lord is near.

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## Transcript

Shall we continue in the fourth chapter of James, and consider the third great enemy of the believer, which is the devil, Satan himself? In the first part of the chapter, as we have noted, we found the first two, from verses one through three, being the flesh, and then, on verse four and five, the world. Now, in verses six and seven, the beloved apostle James touches upon the great enemy we know well to be, the devil. Listen to the words of the apostle, But God giveth more grace, wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Submit yourselves therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. We, perhaps, can recapitulate our preceding study about the flesh and the world, and realize that when a Christian lives for the world and the flesh, he becomes proud. And this is where the devil really works, because pride is one of his best tools.

God knows this, and by the Spirit of God, James has introduced this section by a marvelous promise to the believer, the promise of grace, which means that he is able to provide by his grace all that is needed for us to overcome the devil. Note very carefully that James says, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. We ought to realize one outstanding fact, that God cannot help us when we are lifted up with pride.

On the great necessity of being humble, oh how great this is! Had you not noticed in the book of Proverbs that God tells us how great is his hatred against pride? One is well stated what a terrible curse pride is, but what tremendous power there is in humility. John Bunyan wrote the suitable poetry concerning the song of the lowly shepherd boy in his great story of Pilgrim's Progress. These are the words the shepherd boy sang, He that is down needs fear no fall, he that is low no pride, he that is humble ever shall have God to be his guide.

How the wise man in the book of Proverbs is well written. Proverbs 16 and verse 18, pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Our text in James very clearly declares that God is unable to help us resist and overcome the devil when we are proud.

Then it is impossible for him to give the needed grace. In fact, a proud Christian will not seek to obtain strength and help from God. Unfortunately, he will be trusting in his own strength, but when we take the lowly place before God, he gives grace.

It might be well for us to take a few moments and consider how our Savior in the days of humanity resisted the devil. You probably know the incident well, as recorded in Matthew 4, and also in Luke chapter 4, the threefold temptation of the devil in the wilderness. The Savior is a perfect example of a humble man depending upon God and his grace when he was tested to meet the devil's temptations.

How did he do it? From what source did he find the grace that he needed? It was from the word of God. If you ever note the Savior's answers to the adversary, you will find that he quoted scripture every time, a suitable scripture on each occasion that fitted the temptation. Our text in James chapter 4 and verse 7 says, Submit yourselves therefore to God.

The blessed Savior submitted himself to God's will. He bowed to God's word in humility. He was obedient to the authority of God.

Therefore, it is no wonder that in so doing, the adversary was completely defeated and left the defeated foe. Now, this fact brings up to the statement that James writes in the last half of this verse, 7 in our chapter. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

It is not by putting up a strong, vigorous show or a sign in the flesh that victory over the devil is won, but, very frankly, by submitting ourselves to God in obeying his word, instead of submitting to the devil's desires, we must be in submission to God and his will. What will be the result? James tells it. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Even the beloved apostle Peter in 1 Peter 5, verses 5 through 9. He covers very similarly the truth concerning pride and humility, and he warns of the great danger in verse 8 and 9. Be sober. Be vigilant. Because your adversary the devil is a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

Who resists? Step fast in the faith. May we do this by God's grace and his sufficiency. And thus we summarize in closing this section of James 4, verses 1 through 7. The Christian has three enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil.

But it is of great importance that, as Christians, we should search our hearts to see if any of these enemies are making progress, or are they being conquered? Shall we go on in our meditation to verses 8 through 10? In the fourth chapter of this book of James, now we have the apostle writing, draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be

afflicted and mourn and weep.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. One may really wonder how the apostle James must have known so thoroughly the conduct of these early Jewish Christians to whom he wrote.

For he writes such searching ministry as it comes from his pen under the prompting of the Holy Spirit. I wonder what would happen today if the apostle could bring this soul-provoking letter to the hearts of many Christians who live in worldliness and pride among this generation. What shall we say? The exhortation of James at the commencement of our scripture reading needs to be obeyed.

Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. Is not this the great crying need of the Christian testimony? To draw near to God. Absolutely so, but before this could be done, James hits very hard at the prerequisite conditions needed to do so.

For too many of the saints to whom he wrote evidently had unclean hands. How could they effectively draw near to God? Had not Paul written, though sometime later, in one of his epistles, 1 Timothy, chapter 2 and verse 8, I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere lifting up holy hands, clean hands, symbolic of a clean life, indicating the putting away of sin from the life. For how can we draw nigh to God unless sin is repented of, confessed, and forsaken? Likewise, the heart must be purified.

Let us draw near with a true or a sincere heart, wrote the apostles of the Hebrews in chapter 10 and verse 22. James does not fear to call his people double-minded. As he writes to them, he exhorts them, be afflicted and mourn and weep.

Now, why? What does he mean by all this? Well, if you were a Jew, you would recall that on the national day of atonement in Israel, when God made provision to forgive the sins of the nation, the people were to afflict their souls. They were to search their hearts. They were to show sincere repentance and sorrow for their sins.

It was to be a day of fasting. It was to be a day, indeed, of penitence. The worldly sound of laughter was to be turned into mourning.

The earthly joy of sinful pleasure was to be turned into heaviness of heart, sorrow for their sinful state. The manner in which we should draw near to God is very important. There are two great truths about drawing nigh to God that all Christians should know and clearly set forth.

They are in Hebrews chapter 10, verses 19 through 22. Let me point them out. We have a righteous ground, the only basis of approach to God.

Listen to the words. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near. Here we can find the blood of Jesus, the body of Jesus that was sacrificed, and rent as it were as the veil was rent in the temple, and the fact that he is even now our great high priest in heaven above.

Thus the presence of God, thank God, can be ours. And we have, praise God, in the Christians' assurance of being able to approach God, we have the ability to draw nigh to him. Then the manner of our approach.

How do we approach God is most important, says the apostles of the Hebrews. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. That is our sincerity of heart, confidence of faith, purity in life and conscience, no unconfessed sin between us and the Lord, and our moral walk kept clean.

This is the same in principle that James the apostle requires. Be sure to be clean when you draw nigh to God. Then you will humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Did you ever hear the saying so true and pointed? God's way up is down. Never will I forget the words of one of God's servants many years ago when he said, He that is too big to be little is too little to be big. How true! And the Savior himself corroborates all this in his own words.

He that exalted himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. My fellow believer, let us listen to God's word. Be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble.

There are further exhortations of a practical character in the remaining section of the fourth chapter of James, beginning at verse 11 and going through verse 17. We have the words the apostle now touches upon regarding a prevailing sin that is often present amongst the people of God, and it is the bad spirit of criticism. Speaking evil of one another, James says speak not evil of one another, brethren.

Here again we have the tongue working in a bad way, which can certainly promote dissension and strife among the people of God. We may suppose from the preceding context of our chapter that when Christians live worldly lives instead of spiritual lives, they can be more quick to speak critically of one another. How many local assemblies and churches of saints have been divided and disgraced by hateful critical tongues? When James wrote to the early Jewish Christians, knowing that undoubtedly they still were clinging to the law of Moses, he reminds them that evil criticism of one another placed them in the position of being a judge of the law.

As they harshly judge their fellow members. The words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 7 should come to mind when he said, Judge not that ye be not judged. Our responsibility is not to judge one another in condemnation with an evil tongue, but to seek to be doers of the law, not a judge.

There is but one lawgiver, and that is God himself, who alone has the divine prerogative to save or even to destroy. Paul the Apostle touches upon this same problem in Romans 14. In verse 10 of that chapter he says, Why dost thou judge thy brother? Why dost thou set it not thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Let those of us who name Christ as Savior and Lord never speak in critical judgment about another, but refrain from sitting as a judge upon our brethren. It can boomerang, coming back upon us with divine displeasure and retribution. For Jesus said, For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.

Matthew 7.2 And how often it may be as the Savior proceeds, in Matthew 7, to say that there may be a beam in our own eye while we are endeavoring to take a very small sliver out of our brother's eye. May we indeed take heed to ourselves. From verses 13 through 17 in James 4, the Apostle then warns us of another danger that Christ faces.

It is the danger of being self-confident and asserting our own wills. We can agree that pride and criticism and self-confidence may be found together, but in a truly humble Christian there is always that confidence

of faith that desires only the will of the Lord to be done. In verse 13 of our chapter, self-confidence is indicated when we do what we plan.

What I intend to do. My own will. My own purpose.

I'm going into such a city, says James. You say you're going to stay there a year. I'm going to buy this.

I'm going to sell that. I'm going to make a profit. Now that's my own determined purpose.

And I'll make my own plans, James is insinuating. And if you note at the end of the verse, the intention is to become rich and wealthy. All of this determination by oneself, without any concern about the will of God.

Do you know any Christians like this? Unfortunately, there are too many of them. And the strong intention and the self-willed determination to be successful, prosperous in a material way. What a snare this can be.

How many believers have made shipwreck of their spiritual eyes? Neither can we tell if we shall even achieve the very objective we are trying to reach. But what if to be my proper attitude concerning my future welfare in a material sense while in this world? Please know what James plainly states in verse 14 and part of verse 15. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow, for what is your life? It is even as a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanishes away.

Yes, we are not here for long, are we? James goes on to say, for that she ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this and that. True, yes, we must realize that humility in Christians will always manifest itself by being submissive. Today and for the future days, putting them all in the Lord's hand alone, whatever they may hold, the will of the Lord be done.

The old poet wrote the lovely word, My God and my Father, while I stray far from my home in life's rough way, O teach me from my heart to say, Thy will be done. We know nothing about tomorrow. Wrote not thyself about tomorrow, for thou knowest not what the day will bring forth, wrote the proverb writer, Proverbs 27.1. What a Christian should say is this, I may not know what my future holds, but I do know who holds my future, and that is my God and my Savior.

James very readily discerned that many were boasting about their future plans and their purposes in verse 16, and he adds, all such rejoicing is evil. Yet the whole chapter that we have considered is summarized by verse 17 in its application. Note it carefully.

Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Now James is given some very pertinent and practical counsel for us. We should obey and practice it in our daily living.

But he concludes now, if you know what good you should do, but you never do it, then you are sinning. There is no doubt that the greater conception of sinning to our minds is by doing things we should not do. Sins of commission we sometimes call them.

But it is just as great a sin when we refuse to do what we know God tells us to do, which is sometimes called sins of omission. Oh, may we say with the psalmist of old, Search me, O God, and know my heart, Try me and know my thoughts, And see if there be any wicked way, Way of pain in me, And lead me in the way of a lasting. We come now to the last chapter in the book of James, which undoubtedly reveals, by a cursory reading of it, several miscellaneous subjects for our consideration.

But there is one great subject that is introduced in the chapter referring to the second coming of Christ. In regard to this blessed event, which means so much to a true believer, the first section of our chapter from verse one through nine certainly sets forward a most needed lesson for patience. Though we may be greatly wronged, we may be unjustly treated, yet we are exhorted to manifest patience in such testing, knowing that when the Lord comes, He will set everything in proper order.

Now note how James begins. First of all, he touches upon the sins of the rich. Note his opening words, particularly as you look at them in verse one through three.

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 not eaten. Your gold and your silver is cankered, and the lust 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. Now there is a necessary fact that we must remember regarding the days when the apostle James wrote. There was without question of doubt a great gulf between the rich and the poor, and in part this may be true, and still may be true even in some countries today, but in most civilized nations it may not be as severe, but nevertheless.

It is not the differences in society that James is cheaply writing about, but rather the several sins that are perpetrated by many who are rich, which in so doing, they are preparing themselves for inevitable coming judgment. The outstanding sin that God aims at in this scripture is without any doubt the sin of selfishness and greed, exhibited by the fact that their riches were being hoarded for themselves, their own pleasure and their own satisfaction, with no thought and no intention to use any of their wealth to relieve the poverty of others. Thank God this may not always be true, but a cross-section of the world will probably reveal this fact is true of the vast majority.

In fact, selfishness is one of the leading sins of the last days according to 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 2. What God is saying through his servant James is that ultimately under God's retributive judgment, their riches which have been accumulated will ultimately fade away. Your riches are corrupted, your garments are not eaten, your gold and silver is tankard. The heaped up treasures in the last days are definitely coming under divine judgment.

A careful study of biblical prophecy realizes, will make any student of prophecy realize, the significant importance of the words of Revelation chapter 18, as well as in Zechariah chapter 5. Won't these chapters in the Revelation, the 18th chapter, the 5th of Zechariah, indicate that in the last days divine judgment is coming upon what we would call today godless commercialism? For the vast combinations of material wealth that exist in the world today have completely let go out of their plans and purposes and in so doing, they will inevitably reap divine retribution. But we who are believers and Christians and children of God should seriously consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 6, 19 and 20. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust can corrupt nor thieves break through and steal.

My fellow believer, may you and I realize that our deposit in heaven, in the bank of heaven, is safer than that which may be in the banks of earth. But there's another charge that God makes against the godless selfish rich of the earth, and it is the divine accusation of stealing wages from the poor. Verses 4 through 6 tell us that.

Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields which is of you kept back by fraud clients and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts above. Ye have lived in pleasure upon the earth and been wanton, ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter, ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you. This is a divine accusation, a charge unto them of withholding the wages of the poor, holding back from the poor the wages that have been honestly earned.

How this has been so throughout the history of mankind. Have you ever read God's warning in the book of Leviticus concerning this? I quote the words of Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 13. Note how God to his earthly people stated, Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor, neither rob him.

The wages of thy hired servants shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. The Lord of hosts heard the cry of the oppressed and he hears that cry today and he will righteously bring retribution upon the oppressors. But there is another sin that God mentions, a third one, and it is the sin of selfish greed of accumulating great wealth all for themselves.

As we have noted, that was one of the sins, the first. The second was the sin of stealing wages from those who work for them, and now God accuses them of extravagantly living in pleasure on the earth and in wantonness on luxury. These words denote the excessive covetousness of life, the lasciviousness and the indecency that often characterizes the sinful indulgences of the worldly characters.

The prominent thought behind these words of condemnation indicates a shameless conduct, living in wasteful luxury and actually on money that was stolen from others. And the final sin is injustice. As you read verse 6, taking advantage of their power to abuse and even to kill the poor.

It is true that the gospel appeals to the masses of the poor people. As James has said, it is the poor who seem to be rich in pain. One has once stated God must love poor people because he has so many of them.

But nevertheless, how significant it is as the apostle has written, not many wise men, not many noble, not many after the flesh are called and accept the gospel. And even the Lord Jesus said how difficult for a rich man it is for him to enter through the door of heaven. And it is true that the gospel appeals perhaps more to the masses of the poor people.

As James said in an earlier chapter, they are rich in faith. While the rich in material wealth seem to reject Christ and the gospel, though thank God there is some exception for which we praise him, yet the oppressed, especially the Christian poor, they do not resist. They should leave their case in the hands of the righteous judge.

Shall we not summarize in closing this section and conclude that the unbelieving rich oppressing the poor, the unbelieving rich eating up for themselves treasures for the last days which will fade away will be judged. And the poor believing remnants are to be patient until the Lord comes. And when he comes to deliver, as he not said in Romans 12, 19, vengeance is mine.

I will repay, said the Lord. It is one of the most important principles that James brings before us in this section. The attitude, the conduct of the believer who may be oppressed by those greater in power and wealth over us.

And it is the attitude of patience, knowing as James has declared, the judge standeth at the door, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. It will take the coming of the Lord to settle every problem of materialism, of economical wealth, and of even the moral condition and the violence and the crime that is rampant in the world today. O may we heed the words of James.

Be reminded, the judge standeth at the door, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. In patience may we present ourselves and know that our God will eternally vindicate those who lead their cause with him to be dealt by himself in the coming day of his wrath. As we continue in our study of the chapter before us in James chapter five, we now come to the section that certainly demands and touches upon the patience of the poor.

We do live in a day when there seems to be a universal demand for human rights, often in an extreme manner that is beyond reasonableness. Everybody is saying, I want my rights. There's a cry on every hand in all kinds of society, and even amongst professing Christians, when we feel ourselves maligned, oppressed, and perhaps insulted, how quick even Christians may be to demand the recognition of their rights.

Did you ever consider that there has only been one person who ever lived on the earth who righteously could demand his rights, but he never did? That person was Christ himself? How difficult it seems to us. We can never find another person like him, but God declares that Christians should be like him. Listen to James, verses seven and eight.

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 receives the early enlattering. Be ye also patient.

Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord. Draweth nigh. What is the Christian to do when oppressed, and even when unjustly so? James declares, fix your eyes, keep your eye on the promise of the Lord and his return.

Endure what you are going through. Bear it courageously, and fight the battles of life bravely until the Lord comes. You may ask, as I also may have done, how long have I to endure and be patient in my difficulty? Whatever it may be, have you noticed that the answer that James gives, it may almost be a shock to some others, but he says you've got to be patient unto the coming of the Lord.

See the illustration that the apostle certainly gives. He uses the illustration of a farmer. The farmer ploughs and plants his seed, but his crop does not immediately appear.

He has to wait for it. The early rain must water it, which in Israel usually came in October and in November, but the latter rain did not come until April and May. Then came the harvest, so James declares.

He hath long patience for it. How often we must confess how patience is short. But remember the words, in due season we shall reap if we faint not, as Paul wrote in Galatians 6. And in the meantime, until the Lord comes, we are to establish our hearts.

Do you know what is a great contribution to establishing the hearts of God's children? You probably have difficulty believing this, but it is suffering, even at the hand of the devil. And he is the past master in creating afflictions for the children of God. Remember the words of 1 Peter 5, and let me quote them from

verse 10.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish and strengthen and settle you. After that ye have suffered a while. What a statement! Endure the burden, accept the suffering.

Paul exhorted him timidly. 2 Timothy 2.3 Thou therefore endure hardness, and be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, accept thy share of suffering. Let me point out two obvious lessons.

The Spirit of God declares to us in our portion, beginning with verse 1, all the way through verse 8 in this fifth chapter of James, which closes with the words for the coming of the Lord drawn at night. They both relate to the coming of the Lord. The first lesson is this.

The coming of the Lord will have a tragic, conclusive effect upon the selfish, the godless, and the indulgent rich upon the earth who have lived in luxuriousness and sinful indulgences. It is a solemn warning. They are going to weep, they are going to howl because of the miseries they will experience.

Read Revelation 18 and verse 15, where the judgment of commercial Babylon, the merchants which were made rich, shall stand afar off weeping and wailing. They live well and deliciously in their pleasures. They gratify themselves with all their selfish riches, be it obtained, but they will end with weeping and wailing.

Friends, don't be envious of the wicked rich. They are in slippery places and in a moment will be brought to destruction and depilation. The second lesson in this section is for us to learn who are the Lords, the coming of the Lord.

It is the strongest encouragement for the Christian. It will help him and her to maintain true Christian character during life, and when ended, the tables will be reversed. The Christian, even the poor Christian, will be eternally rich.

Read the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16. Oh, what a contrast! They were different in life. They were different in death.

But, oh, they were different in eternity. One was eternally blessed and the other was eternally tormented. Now, among the various exhortations in our chapter, in verse 9 we have the admonition of the Lord to His people regarding their attitude toward one another.

Saying, Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the judge standeth at the door. Complain not one against another, brethren.

Murmuring and complaining. What a serious sin this is amongst the people of God. This can really be the sin of judging one another.

James declares that the Lord Himself is the judge. I wonder if James is telling us that when we murmur and complain, the Lord is standing at the door listening to us. Have you ever noticed in the Old Testament story of Israel, while they were traveling through the wilderness, one of their great sins was the sin of murmuring? They became weary and impatient in the incident recorded in Numbers 21 because of the roughness of the way.

They spoke against God and against Moses. No question, Moses was the object of their complaints, chiefly. But it was also against Jehovah who had led them out of Egypt.

And from the Scripture in Numbers 21, the Spirit of God reveals that the people were weary of the way. They were tired and weary of the monotony of the wilderness path and their wilderness food. May I be permitted to speak a word to my fellow believers about our present path? Through this world, it is a wilderness path.

As we travel home to the glory of God, do you and I become a bit tired of the way? Is it possible, surely it is, that we may murmur and complain? Are we doing right when we complain to the Lord about our circumstances, our difficulties? Absolutely we are not doing right. Listen to the warning of the Apostle, the words of encouragement that follow in verses 10 and 11. Take my brethren the prophets who were 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. Ye have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

How appropriate it is that James sets forth these to those Christian Jews an example of softening and affliction. The Old Testament prophets who suffered at the hands of sinners, yet they were faithful to God and left the results in His hands. Take the example of Elijah who is mentioned later in our chapter.

Recall how he stood virtually alone in Israel and how he suffered as he attempted to stem the tide of apostasy and even failed to bring Israel back to Jehovah their God. What suffering he endured and he even despaired of his life that God had a far better purpose for the end of his life than death at the hands of the wicked Jezebel. Did he not take Elijah to heaven in a chariot of fire? Did he not escort him into his own glory above? My fellow Christian, is the path rough for you today? Are you discouraged? Not only count your many blessings, but remember where you're going.

You're going to glory in heaven above. For the Lord Jesus has promised, I will come again and receive you unto myself. That where I am, ye may be also.

As one hymn writer as well said, the toils of the road will be nothing when I come to the end of the way. Fellow believer, cheer up, look up. Your redemption in mine draws nigh.

We shall soon be with the Lord. Then let us try not to complain and murmur when the path may be rough. Then the apostle is given the classic example of Job.

We admire the saints of old who endured. They proved that God was able to bring them through their difficulties and deliver them. How about Job? Asks the apostle James.

Have you not heard of the patience of Job? Yes, Job had tremendous difficulty in understanding why he should be so greatly tested. But he did not understand what God was doing until the end of it. And so it is with you and for me.

Can we trust him? Are we able to leave the problems entirely in his hands and say with Job, wonderful are those words that he once uttered, though he slay me, yet will I trust him? And thus we have the lessons given to us by Job's example. May I point them out? There are three in number. The example of his patience, of his endurance.

Second, we are told, as James writes, you've seen the end, the objective of it all by the Lord, the purpose, the ultimate blessings that God gave Job. Read the last chapter in the book of Job in verse 12. Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning.

God doubled his possessions. He blessed him with more sons and daughters than he had before. He lived to be old and full of years.

Let us remember, my Christian, the end of our days, God can make better for us than at the beginning. Then was the third lesson about Job. He said, the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy to his children.

Yes, like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him. He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are done. Regardless as to what trials may come in our lives, we know that God is full of love and mercy and that all things, even the bad things, work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Oh, what examples we may indeed rejoice in to realize not only Elijah, but even Job and many, many others as we could read, if we would, the great examples of the heroes of faith in that wonderful chapter, Hebrews chapter 11. But as we come to James chapter 5 and verse 12, the words that may seem contradictory and controversial to some today are here, but they do hold a solemn message for the believers in the family of God in regard to the purity and the truthfulness of our speech. Note the words.

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 nay, and your nay, let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, lest ye fall into condemnation. These words may be used to raise a controversy in regard to taking a legal oath in the courts of the law or the courts of the land, but I do not believe that this is the gist of the real lesson. When the Lord Jesus was upon the earth in Matthew chapter 26 and verse 63 and 64, have you ever noticed when he was before the high priest, he was put under oath to answer a question, and he complied, for he knew, according to the Old Testament scripture, the law of Moses, that when any person was adjured by an official priest to tell the truth, he had to do so.

What is James trying to tell us? Is it not that our conversation, the answers that we may give to others, whether yes, whether no, should be supported by the holy character and the conduct of our lives, that men may know that when we do say yes, or when we do say no, we are telling the truth? Are we people whose word can be accepted? Do you and do I have the testimony in the world of being honest and truthful? Do we keep our promises? Can we be dependent upon to live up to our word? Can people trust us to be always telling the truth? What a great responsibility this is in the Christian life particularly. The ungodly in the days of James, and even today, there are undoubtedly still many, and there are many rich men in James' day whose word could never be trusted, but the apostle admonishes the poor Christians to be honest and truthful. If we are not, as James says, we fall into condemnation.

May we never be condemned, as a Christian, for telling a lie. We come now to approach an important section of our epistle in its closing remarks, and they are of great interest in verses thirteen through eighteen. In verse thirteen and fourteen, we have three questions raised by the apostle.

Note the order of them carefully. First, is any among you afflicted? Second, is any merry? Third, is any sick among you? Now let us carefully consider these questions separately, and with their separate answers. The first two are very clear for us to understand.

First, ask the apostle, is any among you afflicted? Which means, are you suffering, passing through trials that certainly have come in life? And for Christians, this is no exception, we well know. How simple but sufficient is the apostle's advice? Let him pray. Let him go to God in prayer about the trial.

How blessed is this truth, when it has been clearly set before us in that old hymn which we quote, what a friend we have in Jesus. The writer has well defined the help that we find in prayer by saying, what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. There's nothing better for affliction than turning to God in prayer.

The second question, likewise, is a clear and definite answer. Is any merry? Is any happy? Well, what better way to express the happiness than to start singing? Let him sing psalms or praises. You might ask the question, who will listen to my song? That makes no difference.

The same one that answers your prayer is willing to listen to you sing. It is God that should hear the song of praise. Do you not remember the Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail? They sang praises to God and prayed.

They were afflicted. They were at the same time happy. Although their backs were bleeding and bruised, at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God.

God heard their prayers, and he heard their praises, and what a deliverance he quickly accomplished for them. Surely there is genuine lesson for us in this. Are we afflicted in pride? Then let us pray.

Are we happy in the Lord? Then let us sing. For God appreciates both the prayers and praises. They should go together.

The third question is this. Is any sick among you? Now, what follows is the probable, supernatural healing of the body from sickness in verses 14 through 16. Now, some would say that in all cases of sickness, this can be or should be done today.

Well, let's not be a little too fast about such a decision. That God can heal is true. No Christian should ever deny that.

But God does not always heal. For example, the great apostle Paul prayed three times to be healed in 2 Corinthians 12. God answered him by telling him he must bear the infirmity, and through it he would glorify God.

Paul the apostle left Trophimus sick at Miletum, as it is recorded in 2 Timothy 4 and verse 20. Why did not the apostle Paul heal him? Furthermore, Paul graciously counseled Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach's sake, and is often in permanence in 1 Timothy 5 and verse 23. Now, if you wish to use Paul's prescription yourself, let me warn you to make sure of having stomach trouble or some other infirmity.

And also, if you noted carefully, he said use not a lot, but only a little wine. But our purpose in referring to these cases, Paul, Trophimus, and Timothy, is to point out God does not always heal his children. But in and through their infirmities, he can use them for his glory, even in a greater way.

We think of Epaphroditus, Philippians 2.27, who was so sick, even nigh unto death, for the sake of the gospel. Now, within these verses of 14 through 16, as we follow these questions and answers, let us be very careful regarding the case of sickness. If any sick among you, like the apostle, let him call to the elders of the church or the assembly 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 hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that ye may be healed. This fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Now let us first remind ourselves of the wisdom of realizing the causes of sickness. Many cases are due to natural causes, violation of the laws of nature, which, indeed, can be attributed to our own faults. Then it is also possible that Satan can make us sick, as we have the example of that in the experience of Job.

Then there are times when God Himself can afflict His children in chastening by because of their disobedience, and the examples of this can be read in 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul stated that for the disorderly conduct of the believers of the Lord's Supper, for this cause many are weakened sickly among you in many sleep. 1 Corinthians 11.30 This latter reason, God chastening upon His people, could very well be the distinction of the sickness that is recorded by James. For the whole context has the indication of some divinely imposed measure of correction because of the committal of sin, and also the participation, as it is required, of the elders of the assembly and the prayers of the saints in connection with it.

Now take a little study. Call for the elders. Let them pray over him.

Now, there certainly is the invitation as such to come and pray for the sick one. To practice this today, if we should do so, would require some serious consideration. First, as to who are the elders in the true sense of scriptural teaching.

Second, they must be brethren of earnest prayer. And as to the anointing with oil, there may be two uses implied by this expression. Not merely the sprinkling of it on the patient, but any student of the Greek text will always know that the word anointing also implied a bodily massage of oil, a frequent use to remedy sickness in the days before and during the early days of Christianity.

Yet the main emphasis in our portion that is attributed to doing the healing is not the elders, not even the oil, but the prayer of faith. This shall heal the sick, declares James. Whatever the means of the use, the healing is attributed to the prayer of faith.

But forgetting the confession of sins, not forgetting the confession of sins that have been committed, that they may be forgiven, and there's no question of doubt, if there are many Christians that if they confess their sins, they may get better in health, my friends. For there's no doubt that upon us God permits this chastening, and for our disobedient actions. But anyway, whenever the meaning may be regarding the healing, the confession of sin is involved in our context, and we must remember the words of the psalmist.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. Psalm 66 and verse 18. And then it can be said what follows in James, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

When it comes to any definite action of healing on the part of God, I prefer to realize that a man of effectual fervent prayer has ministered on my behalf. Whatever may be the different explanations I've found, there is one emphatic fact which the Spirit of God emphasizes in a divine miraculous healing. It is the prayer of faith.

For we must believe that our God is still a prayer answering God, and that the prayer of faith has been honored again and again, and can yet be today. The 17th and the 18th verses of our chapter once again emphasize the power of prayer in the example of Elijah of old. James believed in prayer without doubt, deeply so.

There is a tradition that he spent much time in prayer, but what a splendid example for us. Yet he mentions Elijah, a man subject to like passions as we are, meaning that he was as human as any other person. Yet it was not Elijah's natural gift that made him a great man of prayer.

It was his fervent dedication in faith. For James says he prayed earnestly, for effectual prayer can only be successful coming from a clean, dedicated heart. The example of Elijah's power in prayer can be read in the book of Kings, chapter 17 of the first book.

But it is James that tells us that God answered his prayer that it might not rain, and for three and a half years later he answered it again that it might rain to bring forth fruit on the earth. My dear Lamentala Christians, we come to a very great climax in our epistle of a practical note of tremendous importance. How we must confess as Christians our great neglect of prayer for our God would do wonders for us if only we would take time and make time to pray.

What a lesson in prayer that James gives to us in this chapter as he has done it all the way through, and particularly the last half. All the responsibility of realizing this. The chapter goes on with the responsibility and the joy of soul winning.

And here again we have a practical ministry. If any of you do stray from the truth and one convert him, let him know that he which converts the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins. How we may and unfortunately we must confess we do neglect the need that exists amongst our straying fellow believers as well as the lost who are out of Christ.

Now what James is doing basically he implores God's people by these words to bring the wandering believers back to the Lord if they have wandered from him, to restore them and to deliver them from the discipline of death and seeing their sins covered. Then again we must be reminded that the coming of the Lord in our chapter we have learned in the eighth verse draweth nigh. And as we see the return of Christ on the near horizon today, how much we greatly need to dedicate ourselves to the work of witnessing, of pointing the lost to the Savior, of reaching the unsaved relatives and friends and neighbors and others.

Let me repeat the context of this last closing portion. It can apply to our responsibility as Christians both to the straying sheep of the Lord's flock. Are we concerned about them? Are we willing to restore them and help to bring them back into fellowship with the Lord? And even to the lost? Oh when we think of waiting one's soul for the Lord Jesus what a multitude of sins are covered for the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

We well know from the words of the beloved apostle John in 1 John chapter 1 and verse 7. And thus we come to the close of this practical epistle, the epistle of James, one that is filled with practical Christianity and the exhortation given to the early Christian Jews before even the Pauline ministry may have begun. But, oh beloved, the words of James are still pertinent, needful for us today. Yes, as we have already stated in a preceding section of our study, James is presenting to us

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