

**THE EPISTLE OF JAMES**  
**Study Guide**  
Lesson Eight – James 5:7-20

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As we conclude our study of James, it is important to keep the theme of the letter flowing from one section to another. One reoccurring concern that James addressed to his readers was class warfare between the rich and the poor. The rich took advantage of the poor to the point that the poor were condemned by the law and even put to death (compare 2:6-7 with 5:6). Remember that James was martyred by the high priest because of his commitment to Christ and his denunciation of the behavior of the wealthy. This is likely the context of the trials and encouragement to the lowly and the rich mentioned in James 1:2-11. In this type of unjust and hostile environment, people (even Christians) would be greatly tempted to be filled with jealousy, selfish ambition, and judgmental attitudes.

We may have a different governmental rule in the USA in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but greed and evil still exist in the world and each of us have our own set of pressures that tempt us to have the same attitudes as the people of James' day. Jealousy, selfish ambition, and judgmental attitudes spill out as ugly words and arguments that show our lack of faith in God's faithfulness in the situation. As we close the letter of James, we will see how putting our faith to work, in good times and in trying times, produces a harvest of marvelous fruit!

**James 5:7-20**

- 1) For context, reread **James 5:1-6**. Then read **James 5:7-9**. In light of these two sections of Scripture, what were the circumstances they faced that called for patience? What were they to wait for? James used the analogy of a patient farmer. What does the farmer wait for?
  - a) Look up 2 Peter 3:10-13. According to His promise, what are we to look for?
  - b) Read James 4:11-12 and then reread James 5:8-9. James ties the thought of not judging each other to the second coming of the Lord. When Christ returns He will set all the wrongs right for He is the righteous Judge. James 5:8 tells us to establish or strengthen our hearts or stand firm. What does James warn us against in light of the coming of the Lord in verse 9?
    - i) To grumble or complain against someone shows that there is bitterness towards the other. Read Hebrews 12:14-15 and fill in the blanks: *Pursue \_\_\_\_\_ with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the \_\_\_\_\_ of God; that no root of \_\_\_\_\_ springing up causes trouble, and by it many be \_\_\_\_\_.* (NASV)

ii) Read Ephesians 4:31-32. List the words that describe what we are to put away or get rid of.

**Wrath** – An outburst of a strong, vengeful anger or indignation, seeking retribution.

**Anger** – A state of mind marked by strong dissatisfaction towards someone or something.

**Evil Speaking** – Unkind words, verbal abuse against someone, slander, wounding someone's reputation by evil reports, backbiting, insult and defamation.

**Malice** – Hateful feelings that we nurture in our hearts. A desire to see another suffer.

2) **Read James 5:10-11.** James used the Old Testament prophets and Job as examples of those who had “strengthened their hearts” (James 5:8). From verse 10, what were the prophets doing while they were suffering and being patient?

a) Read Romans 12:14-21. Write down some of the principles taught by this passage.

b) Since you have become a follower of Christ, in what ways have you suffered for your faith? Were you patient (long suffering) with those who persecuted you?

c) Read Job chapters 1 and 2 and then go to the end of the book and read Job 42. Job was not patient through this trial but he did endure. While he did question God, he never denied that God was faithful. The Greek for endure means “to remain under.” It means that you stand fast when you would really like to run away. Looking at the outcome of the story of Job's life in Job 42:10-17, how did God show compassion and mercy?

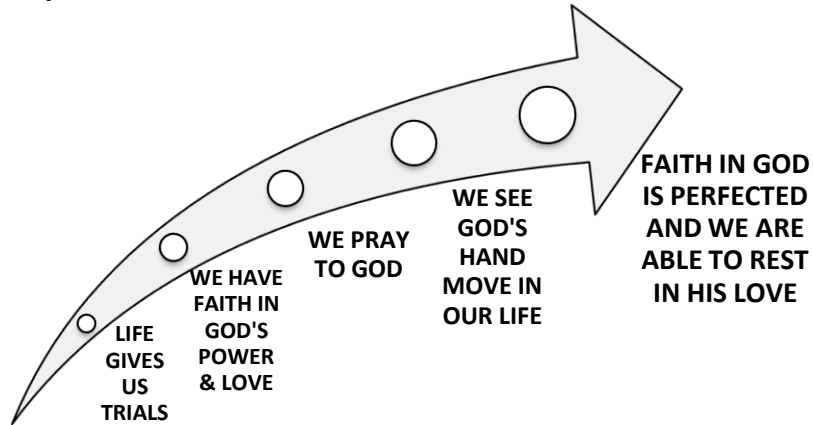
Note: The book of Job illustrates the believer's struggles and also the believer's reward. Job struggled with the “world, the flesh, and the devil” (James 3:15). He struggled with the world as his friends gave him bad advice throughout the book and his wife told him to curse God and die in Job 2:9. (It's interesting that Satan took his children, his possessions, and his health but left his wife!) He struggled with the flesh in his own emotional turmoil. Finally, of course, he struggled with the devil who was allowed to afflict him. The Lord rewarded him in the end by giving him more than he had before. As we struggle with trials and tribulations on this earth, we look forward to the reward of a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21).

3) **Read James 5:12.** Also read Matthew 5:33-37. Jesus was teaching the people to not make a flippant oath by anything holy. Today we hear people say, “I swear to God!” to convince others that they are telling the truth. If we are an honest person, however, people will trust us to be faithful by our word alone. Given the economical climate of mistrust among the rich and the poor, James encouraged them all to be trustworthy. How is not doing what you say you’re going to do unloving to others and a poor witness of your faith in God? Draw your answer from your own life experiences.

4) **Read James 5:13-18.** How many times is the word “pray” or “prayer” used in this section? \_\_\_\_\_

Note: This portion of scripture shows the Lord using our works to produce perfected faith. Prayer is one of the natural works that come from our faith in God and His power and love. The more we pray, the more we see Him moving in our life which builds our faith so we can rest in His love.

**Prayer is the mechanism that God uses to build our faith!**



- a) James uses different circumstances as examples of when we should pray or ask others to pray for us. List the examples he uses.
  
- b) Look up 1 John 5:14-15. When we pray, we are to pray according to His \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- c) Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Does God always heal us physically? What is God’s purpose in not always healing?
  
- d) From James 5:15b-16a, what is the greatest healing we can have? How do we get this healing?

Note: *Wounds were anointed with oil to cleanse them (cf. Luke 10:34), and those with headaches and those wishing to avoid some diseases were anointed with olive oil for "medicinal" purposes (from the ancient perspective). Oil was also used to anoint priests or rulers, pouring oil over the head as a consecration to God. Christians may have combined a symbolic medicinal use with a symbol of handing one over to the power of God's Spirit (Mark 6:13).* (from IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament by Craig S. Keener Copyright © 1993 by Craig S. Keener. Published by InterVarsity Press. All rights reserved.)

- e) Read the story of Elijah from 1 Kings 17 and 18:1-2 and 18-46. In the midst of the drought, how did God provide for Elijah and the widow in chapter 17? What good happened to the widow's son because of Elijah's prayer of faith?
  - i) From 1 Kings 18:37-39, how did God show His faithfulness through Elijah's prayer? What did the people do that showed that they turned to faith in God?
  - ii) What was the judgment that fell on the evil prophets of Baal (verse 40)?
    - (1) In what ways does this remind you of the second coming of the Lord and the judgment discussed earlier from James 5:1-8?
  - iii) After the people believed in God, He perfected their faith by sending rain. Name a time when God has produced the sweet fruit of perfected faith in your life. Share with the group if you want.

- 5) **Read James 5:19-20.** James concludes his letter with a statement declaring the purpose of his writing. James is a book of correction so that believers will produce fruit. What are the two results of correcting a sinner in verse 20?

Note: "Save his soul from death" could either refer to an unbeliever who is saved from the second death at the last judgment or a believer whose sins are leading to physical death (cf. 1 John 5:15-16).

- a) Read 1 Peter 4:7-8. What does this verse say covers a multitude of sins?
- b) Write out James 2:8 for this verse sums up the work of our faith as we, like James, are "*a bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*" (James 1:1).