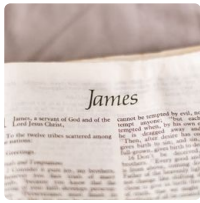


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James 4:5 - 5:20



James - Steve Gregg

James warns against the dangers of loving the world and pursuing worldly objectives, as it is a form of spiritual adultery. He advises Christians to resist the temptations of the devil and draw near to God, reminding them that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. James also urges believers to be patient in afflictions and to call upon the elders of the church for prayer and healing, while confessing their faults and praying for one another.

Transcript

Let's turn now to James chapter 4. And last time we covered the last part of chapter 3 and the first few verses of chapter 4. In verses, well really, 1 through 3 is about all we really got covered. I thought we got a little further, but James raises the question of what is the origin of war. He says that the reason that wars exist is because human beings are selfish.

They have selfish desires. So selfish and so set in their selfishness, in fact, they're willing to kill others in order to obtain what they don't have and what they want and what they lust after. So, in other words, outward war is the result of a war within.

A war with lusts, it says, that war in your members, or desires that war in you, it says in verse 1. It says in 1 Peter chapter 2 in verse 11 that we should beware of lusts that war against the soul. 1 Peter 2, 11 says, Beloved, I beg you, as sojourners and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. 1 Peter 2, 11.

So James said these lusts that war in your members, in your own person, are the things that lead to outward wars. Now he tells us in verse 4, Adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Now this takes the whole issue of war back a further step.

The reason there's an outward war is because there's an inward war. And this war is between the lusts that are in you and God himself. You're an enemy of God.

When a person is set against God, then he has to replace the true God with some other God. With money, or with pleasure, or with some other thing. And it's for these very things that men kill and wage wars.

Because they idolize material things, or pleasures, more than God. And having set themselves in the person of those things, and their hearts upon such things, they love the world and therefore make themselves enemies of God. They are at war with God, and this results in war with other people as well.

He calls them adulterers and adulteresses, figuratively, because they are spiritual adulterers. They're idolatrists. Because they love the world.

Paul, twice, in Ephesians and in Colossians, tells us that the person who is covetous is an idolater. In Ephesians 5.5, and I think it's Colossians 3.5, he mentions that covetousness is idolatry. To love things, to love possessions, to seek after wealth.

This is to make material things an idol. And idolatry for the Christian, just like for the Jew before in the Old Testament, is spiritual adultery. Because we have a marriage vow to Christ.

And we are to worship only God through Christ. And to worship any other thing is like for a wife to go after another lover, and is adultery. And so in the Old Testament, the prophets referred to the Jews, when they were practicing idolatry, as adulterers.

Adulterers to the whole nation, as a harlot. Because the whole nation had gone into idolatry. So here, he's talking to people who apparently, well they are Jews of course, he's writing to a Jewish audience.

And it may be with reference to their Jewishness, or it may be that he's thinking of some Christians. With reference to their wedding vow to Jesus. In any case, to love the world is to love something an idol.

And especially to be willing to kill for the things you crave. Shows that you put a very high value on things that God does not put a high value on. That you would violate his laws, which say you should not murder, and yet you will fight and murder in order to obtain things.

It shows that you'll put something else, the pursuit of something else, above obedience to God. That is idolatry, that is therefore spiritual adultery. And he says, or do you think that the scripture says in vain, or for no purpose, or emptily, that the spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously.

It's not exactly clear which scripture he's referring to here. In Genesis 6-5, before the flood, it says that God said, my spirit will not always strive with man. He was yearning over the human race, but very grieved by the wicked behavior.

Whether James is alluding to this or something else is not all that clear. Of course, in Exodus 20, when God is giving the Ten Commandments, in verse 5, he says, For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of the third and fourth generation. He does identify himself as a jealous God, and I believe it's in Deuteronomy.

I don't think it's somewhere else, but I'm not sure exactly where in Deuteronomy it is. That God refers to himself as the one whose name is jealous. And so, although it looks like a quotation from the Old Testament here in verse 5, there is no known Old Testament passage that is being directly quoted here, but it certainly could be a paraphrase.

That the Spirit of the Lord was jealous over the world and over the wickedness of man. God is a jealous God, like a husband is jealous. The idea here is that you are adulterers and adulteresses if you're loving the world.

It says in 1 John 2, verse 15, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 John 2, verse 15.

If you love the world, you don't have the love of God. If you're a friend of the world, you're an enemy of God. Now the world should not be thought, I think, to refer just to the planet Earth, the globe.

Probably has to do with the system, the world's system, because actually God loved the world in one sense. It says in John 3, verse 16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. And so, in the sense that the people of the world are beloved by God, we should love the people of the world too.

But we shouldn't love the world in the sense of the things it offers, as opposed to things that God offers. The world has, the population of the world is following the one who is described as the God of this world, or the prince of this world. And he is, of course, guiding the world in a certain direction which we cannot approve.

It says in Ephesians chapter 2, that when we were dead in trespasses and sins, we walked according to the course of this world. Yes, sir? Exodus 34, 14, his name is Jealous. His name is Jealous.

Exodus, okay, it's not been written. Exodus 34, 14, thank you for looking that up. God's name is Jealous.

Exodus 34, 14. Of course, James isn't quoting that verse, but he is emphasizing that God is a jealous husband, as most husbands would be if their wives were committing adultery. So God is jealous over his church, he's jealous over his people, and when they begin to love the world, it may be that they think they love God and the world, but most husbands won't tolerate that for very long.

Whether his wife makes love to him and makes love to someone else too outside the marriage. The woman who does that is, of course, making herself the enemy of her husband. She's incurring the wrath of her husband.

By the way, this kind of jealousy is probably the only kind of jealousy that the Bible indicates is natural and good. Jealousy in general is not advocated in the Bible. In fact, jealousy is considered to be a low and base emotion for the most part.

Though, there is one circumstance where jealousy is apparently approved of, and that is between a husband and wife. Unique claims upon their spouse. It would seem that the wife has the right to be jealous over her unique claim on her husband, and he has the right to be jealous over his unique claim on her.

That's how God is. He's jealous over his wife. And it says in Proverbs chapter 6, verse 24 and following says, To keep you from the evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a seductress, do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids.

For by means of a harlot, a man is reduced to a crust of bread, and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Now notice when he says a harlot, he means a married woman who is yet seducing a man who is not her husband. He's not talking about a single woman in this particular instance, because he speaks of her as an adulteress, and goes on to say, Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? Only if he's a Hindu.

So is he who goes into his neighbor's wife. Whoever touches her shall not be innocent. People do not despise a thief when he steals to satisfy himself when he's starving.

Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold. He may have to give up all of the substance of his house. Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding.

He who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor will he get, and his reproach will not be wiped away. But where is he going to get to these wounds and dishonor? Verse 34 says, For jealousy is a husband's fury.

Therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will accept no recompense, nor will he be appeased, though you give many gifts. Now while Solomon is talking about the natural jealousy of a husband toward his wife, who is an adulteress, and how there is a day of vengeance that will be in the heart of the husband who has been wronged in this situation, we know that there is a very clear parallel between God and his wife.

He spoke of the day of vengeance upon Jerusalem in both the Old Testament and the New, because Jerusalem had become idolatrous. Now actually, James is writing to Jewish people, mostly Jewish Christians, though apparently some among the Israelis were not Christians, as he expects. He treats them as non-Christians in some cases.

But he was writing to Jewish people who were living in the shadow of this impending judgment, this day of vengeance that was going to come upon the adulterous wife from her husband. And he would not spare, he won't accept any recompense from her, or from the violation of marriage, he is going to have his wrath, he'll vent his jealousy. So James warns them, don't be afraid of this world, don't seek after things in this world, don't put anything ahead of God, make God your husband the only desire that you have, or else you make yourself his enemy.

And he is not the kind of enemy that a man would like to have. But he gives more grace, it says in verse 6. Therefore he says, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Which probably means, if you are guilty of this, of being the enemy of God and loving the world, you better humble yourself.

You better repent, as a function of humility, so that you might receive grace. Otherwise, you will have God as your enemy, as he said, and God will resist you. If you are too proud to humble yourself and to repent and to get right with God, then God will be your enemy, he will be your resister.

Now later on, just a few verses later, or one verse later, he says we should resist the devil, and he will flee from you. But if God is the one resisting you, be sure he is not going to flee from you, you are not going to be able to stand against him, you are the one who is going to be the loser in that situation. So, this is an appeal to humility, so that you might receive grace, and the jealousy of God might not rage against you.

Now, the statement, God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble, is actually a quotation from Proverbs 3.34. And it is also quoted by Peter, in 1 Peter 5.5. 1 Peter, by the way, you may have noticed, has quite a few parallels to James. In 1 Peter 5.5, for example, we have essentially the same thing. It says, likewise the younger people, submit yourselves to the elders.

Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Now, both James and Peter, in quoting that verse, follow it up with this statement. Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of, this is what Peter says, in verse 6, 1 Peter 5.6, Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

James says, down in verse 10 of chapter 4, Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up before exalting you. So, Peter and James are kind of on the same track here, in this discussion, that you need to humble yourself before God. God gives grace only to those who are humble, or His favors with them.

Verse 7, James 4.7 says, Therefore, submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Now, he's obviously got in mind an audience here, that have made the world their friend. People who are maybe involved in the worldly pursuit of the... may possibly get involved in the war that was going on, or was about to go on. It was clear there was a group of Jewish people who were organizing a revolt, or maybe had already done so at the time this was written, against Rome.

And this led to war and fighting. And James, hopefully, in this chapter, indicated that those wars and fighting, Christians should not be involved in. They involve love for the world, and worldly objectives and so forth, rather than godly objectives.

And it's simply people's earthly lusts that lead them to do these kinds of things. And so he may be intending this largely as a rebuke to those Jewish believers who are possibly inclined to join in the nationalistic effort of throwing off the Roman oppression. It's hard to know.

It's clear that all of this is one flowing thought. He hasn't broken off his train of thought between verses 1 and verse 10. He has accused those who participated in war as being people who love the world.

He has said they are adulterers and adulteresses, with reference to their relationship to God. And God is jealous about such things, and he's the enemy of such people, and he resists such people. Therefore, the only right course of action is to humble yourself, to submit to God, and to draw near to God, and to humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord.

This is what verse 7, verse 8, or verse 10 says. You've got to submit to God, draw near to God, and humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. All of this, in my opinion, is talking about repentance.

Verses 7 through 10, these are just different aspects of repenting. You submit yourself to God, and you stop resisting him. He's resisting you if you're proud.

You've got to humble yourself. Don't resist him. Just submit to him.

Draw near to God. This is done through repentance. You draw near to God by turning to him and turning from your sin.

And, of course, there's reference to cleansing your hands and purifying your hearts. That happens, of course, when you turn from your sin and repent. And the lamenting and mourning and weeping in verse 9, too, is no doubt for those, not the Christian who's got a clear conscience, but the ones who have been friends of the world, the ones who have been in violation here, the ones who are spiritual adulterers and adulteresses.

They need to be broken. They need to lament and mourn and weep over the calamity that they've brought upon themselves and on the way that they've injured God. Now, verses 7 through 10, therefore, is a particular call to repentance to these people.

Now, in the midst of it, there are some interesting things said. There is reference to the devil. It's interesting that the devil was not mentioned back in chapter 1 when temptation was being discussed, although the devil is a tempter.

That was not the focus of chapter 1, verse 13, where he said, let no one say when he is tempted, I'm tempted by God. We would expect him to say, rather, you're tempted by the devil, but he says, rather, you're tempted by your own lusts and enticed. So here he acknowledges that the devil is involved.

The people who are addressed here have been seduced by their lusts and enticed. That's why they've gone to war. That's why they're considering war.

That's why they're seeking to kill and so forth, to obtain. They have been tempted. They have been drawn away by their own lusts.

But the devil is involved, and that is implied here, because in order to repent, you need to turn from the path that the devil has been drawing you into. You need to resist those temptations. You need to resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Now, whereas Jesus said, do not resist the evil man, in the Sermon on the Mount, and no doubt James has some of that in mind, even when he talks about not going to war, because that is resistance of the perhaps forbidden sort, resisting man. Yet we are to resist the devil. A lot of people assume that going to war against people like communists is resisting the devil, because, as I said, I guess it was not in the class time, but I think it was during the break yesterday, there are a certain type of Christians who think of Christian nations as opposed to heathen nations.

That Western nations, especially most Western European nations, have regarded themselves as Christian nations. They're either Catholic or Reformed or Lutheran countries or Anglican. And even though they acknowledge that not every individual in the nation is saved, yet the nation itself is identified as a Christian nation.

Many people have identified America as a Christian nation, though it's interesting, none of our documents of the Founding Fathers ever identified America as a Christian nation. They did mention a creator. It's interesting, the Western European nations, this is just a side issue, a bit of side information for no extra charge here.

Virtually every Western European nation in the charter of the nation, in its constitution or whatever, names Jesus Christ as Lord. The Catholic nations do, the Protestant nations do. They mention that as a nation they acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Of course, the individuals in the nation don't, and they are very clearly a bit presumptuous to call themselves Christian nations. But it's interesting that the official documents of those nations, the founding documents, name Christ as Lord, because these nations are under either the Pope or they're under Lutheranism or whatever. But the American founders, the nation that we think of as probably the most Christian nation of all, they made no reference to Jesus Christ in either the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution or any of the founding documents.

They made reference to a creator in a vague sort of a way, but there was no reference to Jesus, and in that, America is more unchristian in its founding documents than the Western European nations are. Nonetheless, most of us have thought at one time or another that America is more Christian than, say, Iraq is. And that would be true because there's more Christians in America than there are in Iraq.

But there are throughout history those who have thought in terms of Christian nations versus Muslim nations or Christian nations as opposed to atheistic nations like Russia under the Communists and so forth. And that a war between such nations is really a spiritual war. But if the Muslims are coming, well, the Crusades were fought for this reason.

You know, to drive the Muslims out because they were considered to be agents of the devil, and this was what was required in resisting the devil. The Botswans resist the devil. I remember many years ago during the Vietnam War, I was opposed to the war, and my grandmother was favorable toward it.

She's a Christian, and I was giving her some of my reasons for being against fighting the war as a Christian. And she said, well, the Bible says resist the devil, and he'll flee from you. And obviously it was her opinion that the Communists were the devil, or at least were agents of the devil, and for that reason we should resist him in that way.

The fact of the matter is that we must not have been resisting the devil because the Communists didn't flee from us in Vietnam. And so it must not have been a correct interpretation of that passage. Resisting the devil, since he is a spiritual foe, is a spiritual activity.

It involves repentance, as it says here in the passage, submitting to God, drawing near to God. These are the ways in which the devil is resisted and overcome. I was going to say Iraq was calling America the great Satan.

Yeah, I mean, it's a matter of opinion as to who is the devil in any conflict. Both sides think the other side is. And the Muslims do refer to America as the great Satan.

The word Satan simply means anti-Satan. Anyway, in calling to repentance and to resisting of temptation and resisting of the devil, which is a spiritual thing, is quite clear

in this passage. And it clearly isn't involving physical warfare, since it's in the very context of saying physical warfare is out of place for the Christian and is motivated by the wrong kinds of things.

He says in verse 8 that we should draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. And he says, cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. This echoes a number of things in previous portions of Scripture.

For one thing, it's somewhat reminiscent of the Tabernacle. As the priest would approach God or draw near to God in the Tabernacle, he would cleanse his hands of the labor of cleansing, and he would also, I don't know if this was clearly identified in their thinking, but at the altar of burnt offering, where they burn blood sacrifices, there was a cleansing of the conscience supposed to have taken place. Of course, according to Hebrews, it was not an adequate one, but it was nonetheless representative of the cleaning of the heart or the conscience, and the cleansing of the hands was of the labor of cleansing.

So he says, draw near to God, clean your hands, purify your hearts. Perhaps the seminary... Why did I say seminary? I'm trying to think of what word I was thinking of. It must be similar to that.

It's just an Archie Bunker slip here. But, uh, ceremony or something. The ceremony of the Tabernacle, and approaching God through the Tabernacle system may be echoed here in reference to washing the hands and so forth.

Another scripture, which is probably more clearly alluded to, is that of Psalm 24-3, where it says, Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. That's Psalm 24-3. To ascend to the hill of the Lord is to make your approach to God.

Again, in David's day, when he wrote that, it had to do with going to the temple, because God was concerned with being inquired at his temple. If you wanted to inquire God, you'd go to the temple. That's where God lived.

So, to ascend to the hill of the Lord was basically an example of coming near to God. James says you need to draw near to God, but as the Psalm says, that those who are allowed to do so must have clean hands and a pure heart, he therefore exhorts these people who have compromised, who are adulterers and adulteresses, to get their hands and hearts clean, to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts. The very things that are required according to the Psalm.

In addition to this, he may be alluding to the Sermon on the Mount, because Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount alludes back to Psalm 24-3 also, when he says, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. You want to draw near to God? You want to see God? Well, the pure in heart, Jesus said in Matthew 5-8, Blessed are the pure in heart,

they shall see God. No doubt Jesus is referring back also to Psalm 24-3, that you have to have a pure heart to ascend to the hill lord and stand in his presence and so forth.

So James has perhaps both Old and New Testament precedence for the statement he makes here, that we need to have our hands clean and our hearts pure. And by clean hands, it obviously doesn't mean literally washing them as the priest did in the labor of cleansing, that you need to have germ-free palms, you know, to come to God. But your hands represent your actions, and your heart, of course, is the wellspring of your life, and your actions and your thoughts and everything else.

Out of your heart springs all the things that defile man. If it's a defiled heart, all kinds of defilements of life proceed from your heart, Jesus said in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. So, your heart has to be pure so that your life, or the wellsprings of life will be pure. It says in Proverbs 4-23, Proverbs 4-23 says, Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the wellsprings of life, or the issues of life.

Proverbs 4-23. If your heart is pure, then the things that come forth from your life will be pure. You'll have a pure life.

Your hands will be clean because you won't be, as the Jews in Isaiah's day were said to, have their hands filled with blood. Remember how God said to the Jews in Isaiah, chapter 1, I'm sick of your sacrifice, and I'm sick of your new moons and your festivals, don't bring any more of that to me, your incense is an abomination to me. He says, because your hands are full of blood.

And he calls them to cleanse their hands there too. You know, their hands are full of blood, they won't really walk around with their hands covered full of blood. It means that their hands were stained by unrighteous murder, and by the death of the innocent who died because of their unjust policies and so forth.

That their actions had polluted them. So to have pure heart and clean hands is what it takes to draw near to God. And you cleanse your hands by repentance, and your heart by repentance as well.

Now your heart gets pure as a result of repenting, your heart or your conscience is purified by the blood of Jesus. So says Hebrews chapter 9, Hebrews 9, 13 and 14, it says, For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies but purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. And over in chapter 10 of Hebrews, actually this is the passage we'll be covering tonight in Hebrews, not that we'll get to it.

In Hebrews chapter 10, Thank you very much. Hebrews chapter 10 verse 19, See if this doesn't parallel James pretty closely. Therefore brethren, having boldness to enter the

holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he consecrated for us through the veil that is his flesh, and having a high priesthood over the house of God, verse 22, let us draw near.

James has drawn near to God, he'll draw near to you. The writer of Hebrews says in verse 22, 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. Now that's like the tabernacle.

The sprinkling of the blood from the blood sacrifice and the washing of the labor, this is drawn from the imagery of the tabernacle, and it's very similar to what James says. We have to draw near to God with a true heart. James says we have to have a pure heart.

And here he says, Our hearts become pure by being sprinkled, of course with the blood of Jesus, from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts. So the blood of Jesus, and then the washing of the hands, some would apply this to baptism, and perhaps in Hebrews that's what's in mind, but James certainly is not referring to baptism here.

He says cleanse your hands. He's thinking more figuratively. As you wash your hands with water to get the dirt off, so you have to cleanse your actions by employing your hands, and the other parts of your body in that manner, to righteous rather than unrighteous activity.

In 1 Timothy chapter 2, 1 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 8, Paul says, Therefore I desire that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. 1 Peter 2.8 When men prayed, in those days they lifted their hands. And Paul indicated that when men lift their hands in prayer, the hands that they lift should be holy hands.

Clean hands is another figurative way to say it. Your hands are holy in the sense that your whole body is holy, and that you're consecrated over, but that's not what he means. Just the fact that you as Christians are holy, and therefore the hands you lift are holy.

He means hands that have been employed in holy service as opposed to unholy activities. You need to approach God with hands that are clean, and that are not stained and defiled with sinful activity. Now, if you have committed sins, then repentance is the way to have those removed.

Because it says in 1 John 1.9, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So cleanse your hands, he says. Well, you've got to get your sins forgiven.

That's the cleansing of your heart from an evil conscience. And cleanse your hands. God will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness if we confess our sins.

So repentance is what is here in view. Confession, humility before God, receiving the blood of Jesus to cleanse your conscience and give you a pure heart, and of course, having clean hands, either by keeping them clean, or having defiled them, getting them clean. They are regarded as clean in the sight of God if you repent.

And that's why he says he gives grace to the humble here in James. Now, lament and mourn and weep, James 4.9 says. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Obviously, James is not calling for a gloomy Christian life as opposed to a joyous one. Paul says in Philippians, Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Again, I say rejoice. So to be rejoicing has its place, and it's no doubt to be the normal mindset of the Christian. James' appeal here is very clearly to Christians who are uncompromised.

He's called them adulterers and adulteresses. Either Jews or Christians or Christian Jews who have compromised by loving the world and thus arousing the jealous anger of God and are in danger because God is now their enemy. They've made themselves the enemy of God.

God is resisting them and they need to change that circumstance and they need to realize that this is a very terrible thing that they've done and they need to have a heartfelt remorse over it. Repentance doesn't always bring tears, but it should always be accompanied with sorrow. One of the Hebrew words in the Old Testament for repentance is to breathe heavily or to sigh.

Naham is the word. It means to sigh with grief over sin. When it says of God's repentance in Genesis 6, it says he repented that he made man on the earth and it grieved him at his heart.

And there is a godly sorrow that leads to repentance, it says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 7. There is another kind of sorrow that doesn't lead to repentance and it only results in death. But there is a godly kind of sorrow that leads to repentance. It says in 2 Corinthians 7, 9, Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance.

For you were made sorry in a godly manner that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance for salvation. Not to be regretted, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

So there is a sorrow that's a good sorrow, a sorrow of God, a sorrow that is inspired by the Holy Spirit and draws you to repentance. Now Jesus said, Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. That is in Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount.

In Luke chapter 6, verse 25. Blessed are you who mourn. And in the same context he said, Woe unto you who laugh.

So in view of James' frequent reflection on the Sermon on the Mount, he says to those who are in sin, lament and mourn and weep. And to those who are laughing, let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. This is again not to people who are happy for good reasons, but people who are partying and worldly and they're friends of the world and they're kind of numbing their conscience with whatever it is they're doing.

They need to turn their partying, celebrant attitude into the more appropriate mourning and sighing and gloom of serious reflection on the judgment of God that's coming upon them and repenting of it. And then the statement of verse 10, Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up. This is a promise.

It is, as I pointed out, also stated in Peter, though it's a little different in Peter. It's the same thing, but in 1 Peter 5, 6 he says, Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Now here it's like a promise.

You humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up. He'll exalt you. In Peter, it basically teaches that it is necessary for you to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God so that he might exalt you.

In other words, he's not able to otherwise. God cannot afford to reward you when your heart is in a state that he cannot endorse. Otherwise, he's condoning a state of pride and so forth.

He can't exalt the proud. He resists the proud. Now you might say, well then how come proud people are exalted sometimes? Well, they're not exalted in the sense that we desire to be exalted.

In the eyes of the world, they're sometimes exalted. And it's a temporary thing. But we want to be exalted like Christ and with Christ.

It says of Jesus in Philippians chapter 2 that he humbled himself. He emptied himself, took on himself the form of a servant. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and given him a name above every name.

And since that is, of course, not necessarily that he's been exalted in the sight of the world because the world still doesn't honor Jesus for the most part. Yet he's been exalted by God. God highly esteems him and that's what matters.

And virtually everybody else will eventually go like this. Maybe he's exalted to the right kind of God who's going to reign over all that inhabits the earth. That's the exaltation we're looking for.

He's not promising that if you humble yourself now in this world, you'll be exalted in this world also. That somehow men will, you know, revere you or respect you or you'll be promoted in your job or be given a high position in the church. Some very humble people live and die without ever being recognized in the eyes of men but would not be recognized in the eyes of God.

The exaltation in question here is in the eyes of God, which is all that really matters. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up. Jesus told a story in our instructions.

In Luke 14, when he was at a feast, he noticed how the Jewish people all wanted to get the more significant seats. There were some seats of honor at any feast where the most noble sat, you know, sort of like the head table or something where the most important people sat. And the Jewish people who were coming to this feast at this Pharisee's house, where Jesus was in Luke 14, were all kind of vying for the more prominent seats so that they might be recognized and honored by their position.

And Jesus said, you know, when you're invited to the feast, don't take the most high seats, the most noble seats, because what if somebody more honorable than yourself comes and then before everybody in the hostess comes and says, sorry, you have to step down because someone better than you has come. Then you have to shamefully in front of everybody be demoted. He said, rather when you go to a feast, take the lowest seat.

And then in all likelihood you'll be promoted. People will say, come up higher, come up to a better place. You deserve better than that.

And then in everyone's sight you'll be exalted. Of course, Jesus was not basically teaching that we need to so manipulate situations that we get honor in front of men. But he was trying to illustrate the point that those who humble themselves are more likely to be honored, whether by man or God, ultimately, than those who seek the high spots, who want to be the top man on the totem pole, and who press into it.

Now, sometimes people who are aggressive and seek the highest position, for instance, in a corporation, they get there. They become the vice president or the president of the corporation or the chief executive officer or whatever. And they get what they want, but they do so without an awful lot of... I mean, if they do so through aggressive stepping on the face of other people and then climbing the corporate ladder and so forth, they do so without many friends afterwards.

They may have a position that pays a lot of money and even some kind of authority in the organization, but in life in general, they are not really loved and they're not really honored. People might kowtow to them for advantage, because rich people often are kowtowed too by people who want to get something from them. But they're not really

people who are honored for their goodness or their kindness or beloved.

They're not very beloved of man or of God if they sought the way of aggressive, prideful self-exaltation. Jesus said to humble yourself. Then God, in his own time, in his own way, and in the way that matters to him, will lift you up and exalt you.

Verse 11. This is another time that James brings up the issue of speaking. This time, particularly speaking, I guess, in a censorious or critical manner.

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges a brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you're not a doer of the law, but a judge.

There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another? Now, judgment is something that in some senses is right and in some senses is wrong. Everybody has to make judgments, and the Bible in many places insists that we must.

In 1 Corinthians, many times, we're told that we must judge things. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2 that the spiritual man judges everything. Judges all things.

That's part of being spiritual. You make judgments. You discern things.

Many times in Corinthians, Paul says, Judge in yourselves. Judging yourselves is a prop for a woman to pray, a prop to have her head uncovered. Or let the prophets speak two or three and let the others judge.

Or, you know, are you unworthy or unable to make judgments in these matters? Is there not a wise man who is able to judge between his brethren? These kinds of statements in 1 Corinthians and similar statements elsewhere suggest that there is a proper way of judging that is necessary. In fact, Jesus said in John 7, I think it's verse 24. It might be verse 28, but it's John 7. He said, Do not judge according to appearances, but judge righteous judgments.

So judgments of a righteous sort are required. What James is no doubt referring to here is Matthew 7.1, in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus said, Judge not that ye be not judged. And as he goes on to explain what it means, it means don't judge with a double standard.

Jesus explains that as he goes on. He says the standard you use is the standard that will be used to judge you. And you better be careful not to judge people by a standard that you can't stand to be judged by.

Because if you say to your brother, let me get that speck out of your eye, but you yourself have a mote in your eye, you're an hypocrite. He said rather get the, did I say a mote in your eye? A beam in your eye. Get the beam out of your own eye, he said, and

then you can get the speck out of your brother's eye.

Now he indicated that judging your brother in the sense of trying to help him, trying to get the speck out of his eye, is totally inappropriate if you are doing the same thing, only worse. You've got the beam in your eye. But he said if you get the beam out of your eye, now if you're not a hypocrite, if in fact you are not in violation, you can be an assistance to your brother.

You can make judgments. And every time you say this is right and this is wrong, you've made a judgment. It's not wrong for you to do that.

You have to do that. Somebody's got to make judgments of that sort. And Christians are the ones most equipped to do it, because they have God's judgments on the matters reported in Scripture, and we can echo his judgments of things.

We have to discern between good and evil. But James is apparently speaking of the kind of judging that Jesus was speaking of in Matthew 7. It's not too surprising since James is so frequently making reference to Matthew 5 through 7. And he says that a man who speaks evil of his brother and judges his brother is actually speaking evil of the law and judging the law. Now, depending on what he means by judging and speaking evil, it's not all that clear what law in the Old Testament could be in view of what law is being violated by speaking evil of your brother and judging him.

But James has already emphasized a particular law that we have to be judged by. And that is the law of liberty. He's mentioned it twice by that name, and he's called it the royal law, according to Scripture, in another place, James 2.8. And he makes it clear that we're talking about the law of love here, the law that Jesus has given us.

He's not, when he says you speak evil of the law and judge the law and you do the same to your brother, he's not saying that the Ten Commandments are necessarily being violated, but the law of love is. The law of love, which is found both in the Old Testament and in the teaching of Jesus, which has been elevated to the highest status by Jesus and become the royal law of the kingdom. It tells us we have to love our brothers, we love ourselves.

We don't like people to speak evil of us and judge us wrongly. We like people to give us the benefit of the doubt. In fact, we think we're doing something right, but someone doesn't quite understand what we're doing.

We'd rather that they give us the benefit of the doubt that we're not doing something wrong, when it's not necessary for them to think that we are. And we need to treat our brother the way we would want to be treated in this manner ourselves. And we need to speak about our brother the way we'd want them speaking about us.

Gossip and slander are perhaps what's in mind here. When you gossip about a person,

there's almost always an implicit judgment that there's something wrong about what they're doing. There's not very many ways you can speak about another person when they're not present.

You can praise them in their absence, or you can basically say something that's somewhat critical of them in their absence. Now, there's nothing wrong with going to a person who's doing something wrong and speaking something critical of their actions to them. If you speak against your brother and he's not present, however, and you criticize his actions and he's not present, it's clear that you're not seeking restoration in the relationship, because he can't repent if you're not talking to him and he doesn't know about the deal.

If you're talking to someone else, it's clear that you're just trying to gossip. And if you say something negative, you're making some kind of a judgment of him and passing along your judgment through the wrong channels to the wrong people. This is something you don't like having done to you by others.

And therefore, if you do that to others, you're violating the law that says you shall have your neighbor as your son. The royal law according to Scripture. This, therefore, means that you do not believe the law is a good law, if you violate it.

Therefore, you're judging the law to not be a good law. By judging your brother, and by speaking of your brother, by in other words, not obeying the law to love your brother, you are judging that law as being unworthy of being followed. You're basically suggesting that you don't like that law.

You may not be saying it with your words, but you're saying it by your actions. By violating it, you are judging the law itself negatively, speaking able of it. And he says there's one lawgiver, clearly referring to Jesus, who is able to save and to destroy.

Who are you to judge another? Paul asked that very same question. Who are you to judge another? In Romans 14.4, he said, Who are you to judge another man's servant? To his own mastery, he said. We can't judge a person's heart.

We can certainly judge their actions and need to, but if we do, we need to speak to them about it, not speak about them. When he says don't speak evil of one another, he doesn't say don't speak evil to one another, or don't speak to each other about the evil they are committing. To speak to a person about their wrongdoing is okay, but to speak to somebody else about someone's wrongdoing is gossip, and it's not loving, and it's a violation of the law.

Verse 13, Come now you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and buy and sell and make a profit. Whereas you don't know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It's even a vapor that appears for a

little time and then vanishes away.

Instead, you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that. You don't even know if you're going to live tomorrow, much less what you'll do in the next year. But now you boast in your arrogance.

All such boasting is evil. Therefore to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. Now, verses 13 through 16 in particular, warn against boasting of the future.

He says, Life is a vapor. Earlier he said of the rich man, but of course it would apply to anyone, that he's like the grass. In chapter 1, verse 11, well, verse 10, chapter 1, verse 10, the rich, because as the flower of the field, he will pass away.

The sun rises and withers the grass. The flower falls and its beautiful appearance perishes. The idea of man being as perishable and short-lived as the grass, as I pointed out, then comes from Isaiah 40.

It has many echoes in the Bible. Here the same idea is expressed with a different image. The idea is that life is just a vapor.

It's just a little wisp of steam or vapor coming up, perhaps like they do evaporating off the ground. As soon as the sun comes up. The idea is that it's short-lived.

It doesn't last very long. Life is short. And since it is so short and fragile, you can't really boast about the future.

Now, what is wrong here with the person saying, today or tomorrow we're going to go into such a city and continue there? Is it wrong to make plans for the future? Now, Jesus said in Matthew 6, take no thought for tomorrow. And you might think, well, maybe James is commenting on that. That was in the Sermon on the Mount too.

Although Jesus' statement clearly refers to worried or anxious thoughts. He says take no thought about it. It doesn't mean that you should discipline yourself not to think at all about anything beyond this present moment.

He is saying in the context that you needn't worry about tomorrow. Don't worry about what you're going to eat or drink or how the bill is going to be paid. Tomorrow has enough problems of its own to worry about at the time.

You don't have to borrow problems today from tomorrow. You've got enough today. Sufficient of your day are the problems thereof, Jesus said.

His statement about taking no thought about tomorrow had to do with don't worry about tomorrow. It's not necessarily forbidding that you make some kind of, set some goals, that you make some plans, that you plan your steps and so forth. The Bible indicates in Proverbs that's a wise thing to do, to look ahead and to make preparation for the future

to a certain extent.

Of course, certain preparations, when made, are somewhat arrogant. And boastful. If you're saying, OK, here's where we're going to be.

We've got our projected balance sheet for the next 12 months. Here's where we'll be then. I'll be able to get a new house, I'll get a new car, because our sales are going to go up like this and so forth.

My father-in-law, who is a godly man and certainly not guilty of greediness or anything like that, is a good example of how little you can count on the future in these kinds of areas. He's been a millionaire twice and either lost it or given it away for the most part. Lost some of it and gave a lot of it away.

But when I met him, he had a business and he was the president of the business and had over 100 employees. His own stockholdings in the business were worth \$3 million. And he intended to give it all the way to Michigan, but he didn't want to sell his stock because the business was growing.

And he thought, well, I'll sell the stock next year. Because the stock's worth \$3 million now, but he says the way it's been growing, by judging by how the business is growing, he says by this time next year it should be worth \$10 million. Then I'll sell my stocks and I'll be able to give a lot more and so forth.

He wasn't thinking in terms of greediness. But there was every reason for him to believe, because of the way things were going, that his stocks, now worth \$3, would soon be worth \$10 million. So he started to make plans for those \$10 million and what he was going to do with it.

And as it turned out, his business took a totally unexpected downturn and basically went bankrupt. And it not only was his \$3 million not worth \$3 million anymore, his stocks weren't worth anything anymore. He couldn't even sell them for anything for a long time.

Eventually the company did a little better to be able to sell off some of it, but it never reached what it was worth before. But here's a case where even a Christian, who doesn't have evil or selfish or greedy plans for his money, where everything looks positive, says, well it looks like I'll be able to have this much money to work with at such and such a time. You just can't count on that or anything else in the future.

You can't even count on living tomorrow. If the Lord wills, we'll live, is how we should look at it. To submit to God, as it says in verse 7, means that we are submitted to the point where whatever the Lord wills is what we embrace.

We embrace whatever his will is. I'm submitted to that. If he wants me to die, I'm going to die.

If he wants me to live, then I'll live. I live all the time in the awareness that if it's God's will, I will live tomorrow and I will perhaps do certain things that I consider being his will for me to do. But if he doesn't will, I won't be here tomorrow and therefore I can't make any kind of arrogant boasts about where I'll be this time next year or what I'll be able to do or how much gain I'll be able to get.

He's obviously talking to people here who are just like the man in the parable Jesus told. I believe it was in Luke chapter 12. The man who for several years his land was very productive.

He built granaries to store all his grain. And eventually he didn't have enough granaries to hold all the grain. He was so prosperous he tore down his granaries and built bigger ones.

And they got filled up too. And he says, I think what I'll just have to do is stop producing grain for a little while. I'll just take my ease.

I'll stop working. I'll retire and take a long vacation. He says to his soul, soul, you have many goods laid up for many years.

Take your ease. Eat, drink and be merry. And Jesus said, the Lord said to that man, you fool.

This day your soul will be required of you. Then who shall those things be which you've laid up for yourself? And the guy apparently died. But here he thought, well, look, I've got all this money.

I can eat and drink. I can relax. I can retire.

And he's putting his trust in a material financial state that he was currently in and thought he would be in for a while. But he didn't take into account that he could die the next day or that day. And he apparently did.

So Jesus warns us not to be pursuing the riches of the world, but pursue those things which will make us rich in heaven, as it were. He says, so is everyone who is rich in this world but not rich toward God. That's how Jesus quotes that parable in Luke 12.

So the man who makes his plans for the future without taking God into account is a fool. Now, there's nothing wrong with saying, if the Lord wills. In fact, this is what James says we should do.

If the Lord wills, I'll be here tomorrow and the next day and maybe for the next year. And I can start making plans and lesson plans for next year's school year and we'll start talking in terms of how many students we may have and who we'll be teaching first next year and so on. But all the while, we realize that this is just all tentative.

We might die. There might be a war. There might be an earthquake.

We might not have a building. Who knows what will happen this year or next year or tomorrow? Only God knows those things. That doesn't mean it's wrong to make tentative plans as long as you're taking the will of God into consideration and realize that whatever you're planning, God can preempt with some other unexpected thing.

But this is obviously addressed to those who are not thinking in terms of if the Lord wills. They're just thinking in terms of, well, I'm a young man. I've got several years ahead of me.

By this time next year, after I've gone to this city and set up a new franchise over here, we'll have bought and sold and gotten this much gain. He says this person that's under scrutiny here and being rebuked here is the person who is, his whole activity, his whole frame of reference is in terms of his own worldly activities. And he's not taking into account his soul.

And he needs to. Therefore, to him who knows to do good, verse 17, and does not do it, to him it is sin. Now, I have to tell you, I don't know why the word therefore is at the beginning of this verse.

Ordinarily, and probably in this case too, when the word therefore is in the beginning of the statement, it is saying, as a result of what we just said, this is the natural thing to say now. Having said that, it is only appropriate that we should say this. That's what therefore means.

But I'm not sure how the statement of verse 17 is called for, say, from the particular content of verses 13 through 16. It's very possible that it's summarizing everything that's been said previously in the book of James. I'm telling you how to do good.

I'm telling you to be a doer of the word, not just a hearer of the word. I'm telling you not to show partiality. I'm telling you to, you know, walk in godly wisdom and not participate in wars, but humble yourself before God.

All these things are good things you should do. And now that I've told you, you know. You know to do it.

And as he said in James chapter 2, to be a hearer of the word and not to be a doer is to be a foolish man. So we need to be not hearers only, but also doers. Now that you've heard the word, James may be saying, in all these things that we've said previously, do it.

If you don't do it, now that you know it, then that's sin. Presuming that if you didn't know this, it wouldn't be sin. When the Pharisees asked Jesus, you think we're blind too? In John chapter 9, Jesus said, if you were blind, you'd have no sin.

But now you say, we see, we see, therefore your sin remains. In other words, if you really were blind, if you really didn't know better, you wouldn't have sin. You wouldn't be held accountable.

Paul said in Romans chapter 5 that where no law is, sin is not imputed. Which means that you might even sin without a law to define it as sin. And it may yet be sin, but you don't know it, and therefore it's not counted against you.

The ignorance, in some sense, absolves you of the guilt you would otherwise have if you were rebelling deliberately against some known law. But when you know what God has said to do, and he said to be a doer of the word, and you need to act and speak as those who will be judged by the law of liberty, but you don't do it, well then you're in sin. That's what he's saying there.

Many people have used verse 17 to create a separate category of sin, and say basically there's two kinds of sins. Now, there's sins of commission, that when you commit a sin, and James refers to that in chapter 2 and verse 9, if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted of the law as transgressors. When you break the law, you are committing an act, and by what you are doing or committing, you are sinning.

But that James 4.17 suggests there's another category of sins, not sins of commission that you commit, but sins of omission. It's what you omit. It's what you don't do.

You can sin by what you do, that's committing a sin, or you can sin by what you don't do, by omitting or neglecting to do something you should have done. When you know to do the right thing and you don't do it, you are neglecting a duty, and that too is sin. So that it's not simply that if you commit adultery, or kill or steal, or bear false witness, that you are committing sin.

You're also a sinner if you do not show mercy to the Lord. Or if you do not forgive when you know you're supposed to forgive, or whatever. And so sin can be defined in terms of doing the wrong thing or just neglecting to do the right thing.

How does that go along with 1 John 3.4 where it says, Everyone who sins breaks the law, in fact sin is lawlessness. Because the law not only says don't do this, but it says do this. You see, sin is always a violation of God's law.

What we usually think of God's law is the Ten Commandments. Don't kill, don't steal, don't do this, don't do that, don't do that. Although there is a positive, there are some positive things in there.

Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. Honor your father and your mother. These are positive duties that are stated.

For a Jew, not to keep the Sabbath, to omit that, would be a sin. He's still breaking the

law. Because the sin not only says don't do certain things, but it says to do certain things.

Now in James' mind, he's thinking particularly of a particular law. You shall love your neighbors yourself, which he identified as the royal law in chapter 2 and verse 8. And to love your neighbors yourself would call for two kinds of actions. First of all, you don't do things that are unkind to him.

As it says in Romans 13, love does no harm to his brother, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Love doesn't do bad things. But it also does do good things.

If you see your brother have need and shut up your bowels with compassion for him, how do I also love him God? And you, verse John says, chapter 3. So the idea is that if you have love, there are things that you will do. And if you have love, there are things that you will not do. And if you do the unloving thing, or if you fail to do the loving thing, in either case you've violated the law that says you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

And therefore you're sinning. So James points out that there are laws that can be done by committing acts, and there are sins that you can become guilty of because of omitting some of them. Okay, now we're in chapter 5. There's a lot here, but not a lot of time to cover it, unfortunately.

Let's get into it as quickly as we can. Chapter 5, verse 1. Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-beaten.

Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped treasure up in the last days. Indeed, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out.

And the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on earth in pleasure and in luxury. You have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

You have condemned, you have murdered the just, and he does not resist you. Now, these verses are addressed to someone different than verse 7 and following are. Because verse 7 says, therefore be patient, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.

He speaks, apparently, to the afflicted ones in verse 7, but to the oppressors in verses 1 through 6. Now, this makes it plain that James expects that some non-Christians will see his letter. Some Jewish people, perhaps, who are connected with the church in some way, who have been attracted in some sense to the church, maybe, or maybe even who aren't in the church, but who are just readers of all kinds of literature, may read Christian literature as well. Hard to say how he expected non-Christians to hear this, but he's got some people in mind that were oppressors of the poor.

This is something which in the Old Testament is always forbidden. And he says that they have made the very mistake that Jesus warned against in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 6, 19 and 21, Matthew 6, 19 through 21, Jesus said, Do not lay up treasures for yourself on earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

But lay up treasures in heaven where moth and rust doth not corrupt. Actually, in the King James Version, it says your riches are corrupted, your garments are mocking, your gold and silver are cankered, I think it says. And the rust of them will be a witness against you.

The idea of moth and rust corrupt, Jesus said, if you lay up your treasures on earth. And he says that's exactly what's happened to these rich men. They have violated Jesus' command.

They have not taken his counsel in this matter. They've shown themselves to be fools because they built their house on the sand of their riches instead of on the rock of obeying Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. And they have found to be true what Jesus said.

Their riches are corrupted, their garments are mocking, moth and rust corrupt those kind of riches. Now, does this literally mean that their gold and silver had rusted or corroded? Gold doesn't corrode. Gold and silver don't rust.

Some metals do, but those ones don't. So he's obviously speaking figuratively. He's probably saying that the corrosion has taken place either in the sense that it's about to be taken from them, because any Jew who had wealth in the world was going to be losing some of that, maybe all of it, with the destruction of Jerusalem.

And that is no doubt one reason why the church in Jerusalem, that's no doubt why the church in Jerusalem sold their property and gave it to the poor. That property wasn't going to be worth much after the Romans came in and took it, you know. But those who were still trying to gather an inheritance for themselves, material things in this world, those things were endangered at this point in time.

And their riches and their garments were as good as rusted and mocking. It's not that there was a literal bunch of moth holes in their clothing that he's talking about, or that there was actual rust accumulating. The idea is that he's pointing out that they have neglected the counsel of Jesus, and their riches are not going to be worth much to them.

And their garments that they now delighted are not going to be beautiful garments anymore. Remember how Isaiah spoke in a parallel situation, Isaiah chapter 3, to the women with their gorgeous apparel, how instead of this beautiful garment they're going to have nakedness and baldness and a stab and everything. And there's probably the

same kind of figurativeness here in saying your garments become moth-eaten.

He's talking to them in the context of probably imminent loss of the materials that they've stored up for themselves. He says the corrosion on their coins, which of course is not literal but figurative, only God could see it since gold and silver coins don't really corrode, but it will be a witness against you. How so? Jesus said in John 12, 48, I think it is, that he said, He that rejects these words of mine and does not do them.

Let me read this instead of trying to quote it here. I should have lost it. John 12.

I may be looking at it wrong. Maybe not. No, that's correct.

He who rejects me and does not receive my words, has that which judges him. The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. If you know what Jesus said, you'll be judged by comparison to what he has said.

His words will judge in the last day. Now, James says the gold and silver that you have is corroded. The corrosion will bear witness against you in the last day.

Why? Because Jesus said don't put your wealth in a place where it can be corroded. And the fact that you're sitting there holding corroded wealth will be the witness that you are guilty of violating his commands. The rust on your coins will bear testimony of the violation of the commands of Jesus Christ.

By the way, Christians in our own day need to take this to heart just as much as Jewish Christians or Jewish people at any time did. If Jesus gave certain commands and basically said, I don't want to catch you with, you know, moth-eaten and rusty goods that should have been in fact laid up in heaven and not on earth, then we should hope to not be caught with the same when he comes. He says in verse 3 at the end there, you have heaped up treasure in the last days.

Now, I've known a lot of people who've heaped up treasures in what they thought were the last days. Back in the 70s, there were a lot of people who thought that the tribulation was coming real quick and there were certain Christian organizations, including the publisher after I published my book, which was an offering to people who buy for a few hundred bucks, you could buy a year's supply of dried foods. Christians were being recommended to store up seven years' supply of dried foods for the family in the garage and so forth.

And, you know, it cost about, I think it was about four or five hundred dollars per person per year. And so some people were making a lot of money on getting people to lay up treasures for themselves on earth, you know, Christians, which is exactly what Jesus said not to do. And James says that's exactly what these people have done.

They've heaped up treasure in the last days. King James says for the last days, as if they

considered the last days were here, therefore, we better stock up. Here it says in the last days.

I suppose that's probably a better translation, since the New King James usually doesn't change the King James except to bring it up to date to a, usually it's considered to be a better translation, suggesting that James was saying they are in the last days and heaping up treasures is just the thing they ought not to do. Now, I pointed out to you before that the last days or latter days or last times or last hour, final hour, the end of the ages, these are expressions that Paul, Peter, John, and others in the Bible use to speak, and the writers and readers speak of their own time. They speak of their own time as the last days.

And James obviously is joining the other writers of Scripture in doing so. He's saying we are in the last days here, and you have wrongly heaped up treasures as Jesus said not to do. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.

Jesus said, well, that's exactly what these people have done in violation. They've heaped up treasure. And here it is in the last days.

It's the day of reckoning for the Jew, because the judgment is coming down. Now, as you know, I believe that the term the last days in these kinds of contexts in the New Testament refers to the last days of the Jewish state, and therefore it is with the view of the impending judgment on Jerusalem that this is uttered. Indeed, the wages of the laborers, verse 4, who have mowed your fields, which you have kept back by fraud, cry out.

And the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Now again, Lord of Sabaoth, as I pointed out in our introduction, is an Old Testament name for God. It's actually Hebrew.

Sabaoth is a Hebrew word, which is unusual here in a book that's written in the Greek language. Sabaoth is the Hebrew word for armies. And many times in the Old Testament, God is called the God of armies, the Lord of Jehovah Sabaoth, or the Lord of Armies, or sometimes it's translated Lord of Hosts, meaning armies.

And for some reason, James pulls this Old Testament Hebrew name for God out and applies it to God who has heard the complaints of the poor, who have been oppressed by the rich Jews here. And it may be that he here refers to God as the Lord of Sabaoth, or the Lord of Armies, because he's saying that's exactly how God is going to manifest his displeasure, by sending his armies. Jesus, in the parable of the wedding feast, the first guests who refused the invitation, who represented the Jews who first had an opportunity to come into the kingdom of God, he says the king was angry and sent out his armies and destroyed their city, murdered those people and burned down their city.

Obviously predicting what was going to happen in Jerusalem. Here also, James may be alluding to that very fact that God's armies are going to come to the vengeance in favor of the poor who have been oppressed. Now, the first four sounds like he's just talking about normal oppression.

This happened an awful lot. Poor people would go work for a wealthy landowner and they were at the mercy of the landowner to pay him or not. The law of Moses said, in Deuteronomy 24, verses 14 and 15, that the landowners were supposed to pay their workers every day at the end of the day, because the poor didn't have any laid up money.

And so they had to buy their daily food with the money they made every day. They couldn't get a paycheck every two weeks. They wouldn't be able to make it between paychecks.

So, Deuteronomy 24, 14 through 15, commanded that employers pay their employees at the end of each day. Jesus said he was terrible about the landowner who hired people at different times during the day. He paid him at the end of the day.

That was the typical Jewish practice. However, to withhold such pay was something that dishonest employers sometimes did. Perhaps for the same reason that people withhold paying their bills on time here, because they want to keep the money in the bank for another day or two days or a week or two and get the interest on it.

Finally, when the law is bearing down on them, they finally pay up. But they've made interest on that money for all the time they've withheld it over time. And that's how a lot of businesses craftily make more money than they deserve.

They have 90-day payable accounts and stuff, so that before they pay the people who sell them stuff, they hold the money for 90 days, so that they can make interest on that money in the bank for those 90 days before they pay it. That's a very typical business practice, and it's legal in this country. And it's sometimes just an understood thing among certain buyers and sellers.

But biblically it was not allowed. You don't hold back the wages of your laborers so that you can make interest on it for a few more weeks. You pay them the same day.

It says in Proverbs 3, verses 27 and 28. Proverbs 3, 27 and 28. It says, Do not withhold good from him to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to give it.

Do not say to your neighbor, Go and come again, and I'll pay you tomorrow, when you have it with you. Proverbs 3, 27 and 28. It's basically saying, Don't put off the guy until tomorrow, when you owe it to him today.

Now, James seems to be addressing actual oppressors, actual rich landowners, whose

fields have been mowed and harvested by laborers, but they've withheld their wages. They haven't given them to them. And actually, he says, Well, these people have cried out to God, and he's going to vindicate them.

Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. The cries of those who have reaped your fields, and their wages have been withheld by your fraudulent dealings, those wages and their cries have come to the attention of God, the God of armies. And the suggestion that he's the God of armies suggests that maybe he's going to send those armies to enforce justice in this situation.

I have been, for some years, inclined to see a spiritual application of this particular verse. Because the very wealth of wealthy Christians in America, often, I think, is an unjust withholding of money that is God's money, which should be paid out to missionaries, for instance, who are out reaping the fields. Jesus said the fields are white and ready for harvest, and pray that the Lord of harvest will send laborers.

And when he finally does send laborers, someone's got to pay them. And a person who's out there in the third world as a missionary, he can't go out and earn his own keep. He's dependent on the Lord's people coming up with the money that is really God's money that they're supposed to be stewarding.

But many times, the fact that a Christian is living much more comfortably than he needs to, when he knows of laborers who are living with not as much as they really need out in the fields, he's withholding their pay by fraud. It's fraud because he's acting as if the money's his when it's really God's money. And God has said, pay those people, and you're not doing it.

Support these people, but you're not doing it. Instead, you're feathering your own nest. Instead, you're building up your own lifestyle with your money.

That is holding the laborers' pay by fraud. And it's these people proud to God. And God may just come to their aid.

It says to them in verse 5, you've lived on earth in pleasure and luxury. Apparently, that's something Christians are not supposed to do. And you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

And it's just like on a day when you slaughter your beef, and that's the day when you have fresh meat before it goes into refrigeration. The day of slaughter is the day when you ate as much meat as you could before it got bad. While it's still fresh.

And for a long time after, you'd eat salted, dry jerky or something. You know, until you slaughtered another animal. But the day of slaughter is always a great feasting time.

He says, you have condemned, you have murdered the just, and he does not resist you.

It's hard to know exactly in what way they condemned and murdered the just. It does say back in James 2 that the rich men were oppressing and bringing them before the judgment seats.

The Christians, the righteous Christians, were being brought before the judges and oppressed and abused in the courts by the rich. James 2, 6 says, you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Exactly how this was being done, we're not sure.

Probably through prosecuting them as Christians, because the righteous don't break laws. I mean, they wouldn't be prosecuted in court for, say, robbing somebody or for doing an injustice. So they must have been being persecuted just because they were righteous.

And the righteous do not resist, he says, when you do this. Jesus had told them not to resist the wicked man, and they're not. But the fact that he addresses a group of people who are actually unjustly persecuting Christians and murdering them shows that he did expect some non-Christians to read this letter or for it to come to their attention.

Or maybe he was just giving Christian sermon material to preach to their worldly neighbors or something. They were doing these kind of things, hard to say. But he speaks very much like an Old Testament prophet in this passage, because the Old Testament prophets basically raised the same objections to the worldly Jews who were violating God's laws and particularly oppressing the poor.

Verse 7, address them to the poor who are being oppressed, the just who are being murdered and condemned wrongly. Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. This is not the first time they're told to be patient.

In fact, at the very beginning of the book, he tells them to rejoice in their trials, because these trials were patience in them. Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until he receives the early and the latter rain.

You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned.

Behold, the judge is standing at the door. Don't grumble against one another. Perhaps it means these poor people or these just people who are being condemned wrongly and oppressed by the rich would tend to grumble about it.

Most would, but he says don't grumble against each other. Just know the judge is coming. Judgment is at hand.

The Lord is near. The judge is standing at the door. You don't have to grumble.

If you grumble, you're talking a bad attitude and then you'll be condemned. You keep your spirit clean. Be patient.

Wait silently. Do not resist. Don't grumble.

Just trust the Lord and know that judgment is on the way. Be patient to the coming of the Lord. He says in verse 8, the coming of the Lord is at hand.

In verse 8 and 9, he says the judge is standing at the door. Now, as I've said before, if Daniel's talking about the second coming of Jesus, which we are also waiting for, then James missed it by a good bit. Because the second coming of the Lord was not very much at hand 2,000 years ago when he wrote this.

Nor was he in any meaningful sense at the door, if we mean the second coming. Now, the statement, the judge is standing at the door is obviously an expression that James borrowed from Jesus. In Matthew 24, in the Olivet Discourse, verse 33, Matthew 24, 33, Jesus said, When you see all these things begin to come to pass, know that it is near, even at the doors.

And some manuscripts say, know that he is near, even at the door. And the idea that the judge is at the door is simply echoing what Jesus said. You'll know that he's at the door when you see these things begin to come to pass.

Obviously, James felt that they had seen enough in their own day of the things that Jesus predicted in Matthew 24 to know that it was near. Now, what was it that was near? Well, in Matthew 24, the disciples asked Jesus when the temple was going to be destroyed, because Jesus had predicted its destruction. Since that happened when Jerusalem was destroyed, that's what was near.

That's what you could know was going to be near. He said, when you see these things begin to happen, you'll know it's near. It's at the doors.

James says, that time has come. In other words, he makes it clear that he sees the fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse in his own day, and therefore he can take the signal that Jesus gave when he sees, you know, it's at the door. He says, listen, the judge is at the door.

These Jewish people who are pressing you, they're going to get judged real quick. Yes, sir. James chapter 1 says, through the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.

Is that scattered abroad throughout Jerusalem? I thought he meant like... I think through the world. Through the world. See, the judgment on Jerusalem was the judgment on Judaism in general, because the Jews got... Well, think about it.

The Jewish state was at war against Rome. What do you think the condition of Jews

outside their country in Roman provinces was? I mean, here, there's actually a full-blown war going on for three and a half years between the Jewish people and the Roman government. Well, the Jews that were scattered abroad were still Jews.

I mean, it's like when we were at war with Japan, and we're a fairly benevolent nation compared to the Roman Empire, I think, but we took all the Japanese people up and put them off in detention camps, because we're afraid that... I mean, the Japanese were our enemies, and we didn't want these people to turn against us. Even though these were American citizens born in this country, even, Japanese people, and may have been totally loyal Americans for all we know, the very fact that they were of the same race as the people we were in moral conflict with made them under suspicion. I mean, they were somewhat treated like enemies, too, put in concentration camps in this country.

And I'm sure that a nation like Rome, which is far less benevolent than America in its demons, would have similar persecution of Jews in its provinces at a time when they're locked in moral conflict with the Jewish nation, you know? And, I mean, Judaism and Jewishness would come to be seen as enemies of Rome at a time when the Jewish state is actually locked in a revolution against the Roman Empire. It's what it really was. And with the destruction of the Jewish state, would come, well, would come the total demoralization.

The totally, well, I mean, the Jews were scattered throughout the whole world at this time. I mean, some were scattered peaceably at this point in time, but after the 7th AD, they were scattered as slaves and taken off into Egypt and places like that. I mean, the Jews in the provinces probably did not escape some kind of retribution.

In fact, when Jesus said in Matthew 24, when you see wars and rumors of wars in diverse places and so forth, when we talk about Matthew 24, I'll bring this up, but just before 7th AD, there were slaughters of Jews in Alexandria and in Syria and in other places in the Roman Empire outside of Israel, because the whole civilization was turned against the Jews, because the Jews were against the whole civilization. It's like the Roman Empire was all the world, and the Jews were at war with the world, you know? And so even outside of Israel, Jewish people experienced slaughter at the hands of their Gentile neighbors and so forth, and we'll document some of those things when we get to the Ottoman Discourse. But even though his letters addressed Jews who were scattered abroad, probably including the ones in Palestine, but Jews wherever they may be, probably, scattered throughout Palestine and outside of Palestine, the judgment of Jerusalem and of the Jewish state was a judgment that affected all Jews.

For one thing, Jews all over the Empire came to Jerusalem. And by the way, it was Passover time when Romans besieged Jerusalem, and there were pilgrims, Jews from all over the world, because every male Jew over 12 years old had to go to Jerusalem at Passover, if he possibly could. And so Jerusalem was abnormally swollen with visitors at

the time when it came under siege from the Romans, and therefore there were an unnaturally large number of Jews in the city.

I think Josephus said that over 2 million Jews were caught in the siege, which was about two-thirds of the Jewish population of the world at the time. So it had worldwide impact on the Jews. It was not just something that affected those in that little corner at the edge of the Mediterranean there.

So, it seems that James is making an application of the Olivet Discourse. The reason is the judge is at the door. The coming of the Lord is near.

In judgment, the Lord is going to send his armies. And therefore, be patient. Wait, it's just a little longer, essentially, he's saying.

And he says, be like the farmer who is patient. The farmer has to wait for everything to be just right, for the grain to ripen, for the latter rain to come as well as the former rain. And when the grain's ripe, then it's time.

He's just got to wait. It's just a waiting game right now. Vengeance is not ours to take.

It's just for us to wait on God. And he'll do it in due time. And he was suggesting to the people at this time that it wasn't very far off.

My brethren, take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord as an example of suffering and patience. So, he expected that they should exhibit the same kind of resignation to their suffering, as the prophets of the Old Testament had to accept. Indeed, we count them blessed who endure.

Why does it say, we count them blessed who endure? Jesus said, blessed are you when men shall persecute you and hate you, and cast out your name as evil. So, on the basis of that, the attitude, blessed are you, we count them blessed if they endure this kind of treatment. Another echo, obviously, of the Sermon on the Mount.

You have heard of the perseverance of Job, and have seen the end intended by the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. So, not only the prophets, but Job, who was not even a Jew, but who endured tremendous afflictions, are put before us as examples of suffering and of being patient. Now, by the way, in Hebrews, Jesus is added to the list of those to look unto.

Look unto Jesus, who endured such contradiction of sins. Against himself, lest you be thinking weary in your minds. It says in Hebrews 12, in the opening verses.

So, the prophets, Job, and Jesus himself, are all examples of people who suffered in a manner that we're supposed to imitate. But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth, or with any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no, no,

lest you fall into judgment. Now, verse 12 here is probably the closest thing to an exact quote from the Sermon on the Mount that we have, although other passages come pretty close.

Jesus talked about this in Matthew chapter 5, about letting your yea be yea and your nay, nay, and not swearing. We don't have time to talk in detail about swearing, or why he would say, above all, brethren. Which would seemingly mean, this is the most important of all things.

Why would the abstinence from taking oaths be the most important of all things that he already said? Generally speaking, I think we can say that Jesus' teaching on this subject was a teaching to be honest. That to be a person of honest character should not require the use of oaths in your vocabulary. Oaths were taken by those who were dishonest and had to be bound by oath to require them to do what they said they would do.

You should be honest enough that if you say yes, no oath is needed to bind you. You'll do it. Your conscience binds you.

Your own integrity binds you. If you say no, that's what you mean. And that's what you can be counted on to carry out.

Your yes means yes, your no means no. You need no swearing or oath to bind you to it because your own integrity binds you. Basically, the statement may just be a long way of saying, be honest.

Above all things, be honest people. Keep your conscience clear. Be people of integrity.

Because many people used oaths, not only to bind a person who is dishonest and make them do what they didn't want to do but what they said to do, but sometimes even to trick people because the Pharisees had oaths that were binding and oaths that were not. The rabbis had made these things. Therefore, they might take an oath that they secretly knew was not binding.

Therefore, they would pretend like they were binding themselves and they wouldn't. And they'd say, oh, well, I took an oath that wasn't binding. We've talked about that.

We've seen that sort of amount earlier. Verse 13. Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.

Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? 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 will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up.

And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer

of a righteous man avails much.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. And he prayed earnestly that it would not rain. And it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth produced its fruit. Now, this is essentially a passage about prayer. It starts out, is anyone suffering? Let him pray.

And it closes with the example of Elijah's prayer. And it talks about praying for the sick. And so, although some other points come up besides the basic issue of prayer, this is essentially a paragraph about the need to be prayerful.

If you're suffering, instead of grumbling, as he points out in verse 9, don't grumble. Just pray. Commit the keeping of your souls to him in well doing as unto a faithful creator, as Jesus on the cross.

He didn't threaten. He just said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. He prayed and resigned himself to the will of God and prayed for God to take care of things.

He committed himself to God. That's what we are to do when we're suffering. Commit our situation to God in prayer.

Now, it doesn't say whether you should pray for relief from your sufferings, but no doubt that is all right. I mean, praying for relief is okay. But going to God in prayer is the right response to suffering.

Whether it is to pray for relief, or to pray for grace, or whatever, suffering is intended to make you more prayerful. That's one of the benefits that suffering gives in the life of the risen. It makes him more prayerful.

Paul said, I prayed three times that God would take away the thorn in the flesh. Well, he wouldn't have prayed those three prayers if he didn't have a thorn in the flesh. It made him more prayerful to have it.

Suffering makes a person more prayerful in many cases. And that's what suffering is to do. So if you are suffering, do what you're supposed to do.

Pray. Let it have its perfect work in you in making you a more prayerful person and turning to God, seeking His grace or His relief or whatever. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.

The correct expression of cheerfulness is to sing psalms. Now, the psalms are sometimes called the Prayers of David. In the psalms themselves, there's a place where it punctuates the book by saying the Prayers of David are ended, meaning that the previous psalms were the Prayers of David.

As you know, many of the psalms are in fact prayers. To sing the psalms would in many cases involve you singing prayers to God. Cheerful people can sing their prayers.

Hurting people can just pray. If you're cheerful, go ahead. Sing the psalms.

Express your cheerfulness in your communication with God. Is anyone among you sick? 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 will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

And if he's committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Confess your trespasses one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Now, he's told the afflicted person to pray, he's told the cheerful person to sing psalms, and now he's saying we should pray for one another so that we might be healed. We not only pray to God about our own afflictions, we pray about other people's afflictions. We pray one for another that we may be healed, that they may be healed.

Now, Job actually got healed when he prayed for his friends. It says in Job 42. The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends, not when he prayed for himself.

I'm not saying that you won't get healed if you pray for yourself, but it's interesting that his healing came when he prayed for someone else. Now, the sick here is not told to pray for himself, but to call for the elders of the church to pray for him. And apparently confessing his sins is part of that, because it says, you know, confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed.

Now, it says here that if you call for the elders of the church and they anoint you with oil, it says the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up. Now, there's two possible understandings of this. Save and raise him up.

Can be identical in meaning to the word heal. Save and raise him up is found in verse 15. And heal, of course, is down in verse 16.

Pray one for another that you may be healed. Is saving and raising him up a reference to healing? It could be. In fact, that's probably, in some sense, is the most natural way of understanding it.

In which case, we have a promise that if you're sick and you call for the elders of the church, you'll get healed. If they anoint you with oil. Now, I personally have felt most of my life that that's what this means.

One of the problems I've had is that as an elder, I have prayed the prayer of faith in

order to anoint people with oil, along with the other elders. And sometimes they've been healed, sometimes they haven't. And sometimes they've been partially healed.

And not fully healed. It's a strange thing. And sometimes I've called for the elders of the church and been anointed, and I've been healed, sometimes I'm not.

And it sounds as if it's just saying, all you gotta do is this. And if they pray the prayer of faith, such and such will happen. But what will happen? It says the prayer of faith will save the sick in order to raise him up.

Does that mean he'll be raised up from a sick bed and saved means healed? It could. Because he does later say, pray in front of it, you might be healed. And to pray for a person to be healed is the right thing to do.

But another possible interpretation, maybe less desirable and less acceptable, but one that the words would allow, is that he's implying, because he has addressed some of these remarks to unsaved Jews. The rich men and others. Those who say they have faith but have no words.

Those who are clearly not really saved at all. Maybe to those he's saying, if you get sick, you'll realize you're mortal. That may be the time when you'll really be willing to get right with God.

If that's true, then you call for the elders of the church. And the anointing with oil could have been associated with baptism or could have been associated with some other ritual that was practiced when people became Christians. We don't know if it was or wasn't.

It could have been associated with the baptism of the spirit. Oil could be seen as a reference to the Holy Spirit. And he could be saying, if an unsaved sick person calls for the elders of the church for the sake of joining the church, for the sake of becoming a Christian, the prayer of faith will save him in the sense that people get saved when they turn to Christ.

And the Lord will raise him up is a very typical expression in Jesus' teaching for the resurrection. So it either means that if you get prayed for in this manner, you will be healed. Or it means that they will, this is the way that they can assure themselves of salvation whether they get healed or not.

That if they're sick, their life is perhaps in question. Their survival is in question. But they can have their assurance of salvation if they call for the elders of the church, they pray a prayer of faith, they get healed, or I say they get prayed for, they confess their faults, they at least will be saved.

And even if they die, they'll be raised up. Now that's one possible way of seeing it also. It seems to me like the wording of the passage would allow either case.

He does say to pray one for another and they'll be healed. And he says that the effectual firm prayer of a righteous man gets results. It avails much.

But whether this is a promise that a person, whoever is prayed for by elders will be healed is something that is maybe not as clear as I wish it were in terms of the language used in verse 15. Now Elijah was a man like us, but he prayed fervently and a tremendous thing happened. He was able to stop the heavens from raining for three and a half years.

A Christian probably won't ever pray that exact prayer, but he's saying that miraculous things have been seen to be accomplished through prayer, through men who are no more spiritual than us in some respects. They were just men of like passions as ourselves, same nature as we have. Therefore, it means that God harkens to man in prayer.

Of course, Elijah was praying according to the will of God, and if you pray according to the will of God, that's how things get done. If it's a fervent and effectual prayer and you're a righteous man, and you have faith, it's a prayer of faith, there's an awful lot that can be accomplished. It avails much.

Now, verse 19 and 20, the closing verses. Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back or restores him, let him know that he who turns the sinner from the error of his ways will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. This is addressed to brethren and therefore, I assume, it means Christians.

He says, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, suggesting that they were once in the truth, they were brethren, they were among the brethren and they were people of the truth, but they have wandered, they have strayed, like a sheep can stray. Jesus said, a good shepherd will leave 99 sheep to go after one that is strayed and bring it back. It would seem like he's drawing a picture of a strayed sheep, one of God's sheep, one of Jesus' sheep, a Christian.

But if it's strayed from the truth, then somebody has to care for that person's soul and go after them and seek to restore them. In Galatians 6.1 it says, Brethren, if you see a brother overcome by a fault, you who are spiritual go and restore such a one in spirit of meekness. So that it is commanded of Christians that they restore those brothers who seem to be wandering or straying or caught in a fault and go and restore them.

Restoration is what we're called to do. And there are people who backslide. There are people who fall away.

And we should do everything we can to restore them, not just say, well, let them go. It's their own choice. They've got free choice.

Let them make their stupid choice. So go and try to bring them back. And the person

who does that is to be informed and encouraged that he who does that, who turns the sinner from the error's way, will save his soul from death.

And he'll save the sinner's soul, not your own. You don't save your own soul by going out and evangelizing people. Some have understood it that way, as if it's salvation by works of evangelism.

No, it's the soul that has drifted, whose soul will be saved from death by being restored. And we'll cover a multitude of sins. The wording of this passage has led to different interpretations.

And some people do not believe this is referring to a Christian backsliding and being restored. Of course, there are people who believe Christians cannot backslide. And yet, it does seem like it is talking about a true Christian, literally backsliding to a place where his soul is in danger of death.

In fact, to restore him is to save his soul all over again. He saves his soul from death. So this would seem to suggest a couple of things of importance.

One is that a person who is really saved can fall away. Something that some people's theology denies. Some people say, if you're really born again, you can't fall away.

God will cause you to persevere. But it does seem like some brethren can wander from the truth and be in a state where they need their soul saved from death again. But the other thing it points out is that they can be restored.

And that again goes against some thinking because some people feel that the way they understand Hebrews 6, a person dressed after knowing the truth, that they cannot be renewed to repentance. That passage, of course, must be treated on its own in another way. But this passage seems to imply that such a person can be, at times, restored and their soul can be saved from death again.

And their sins can be covered, even though they have drifted from the truth. So, there is the danger of, although I don't know how common it is for a person who is truly converted to fall away to that extent. I think it can happen.

The Bible indicates it. It also indicates that people can be restored. And the person who does this to them is a good servant.

It says in Proverbs, he that saves souls, or he that wins souls, is wise. And it says in Daniel chapter 12, that they that turn many to righteousness shall shine like the stars forever. And here, it is the one who is out there bringing back these sinners and winning their souls back that is to be informed of this.

This is a word of encouragement to those people. Let him know who does this. That he

that turns the sinner from the error's way, shall save the soul from death.

That should make it seem to be a very important work, a very worthy work, and something that we should be employed in, according to James. Apparently, James was aware of some who had drifted away, just like the writer of Hebrews knew some Jews were drifting away. And in light of the fact that there was a great judgment for God coming, we need to encourage one another, not for safety, assembling ourselves together, as Hebrews said, as some had already done.

And James apparently knew of some who had drifted like that and needed to be brought back. James and Hebrews were both aware. Apparently, it's Jewish people who were needing to be warned that there was a... And Jewish Christians, who perhaps some of them were drifting away.

And going back to Judaism, they needed to be warned that in light of the impending judgment of Jerusalem, they really are taking their life in their hands. And of course, in terms of eternal things, they're taking their life in their hands, too. And there's no room for compromise or for just outward profession of things.

We need to live what we believe, and we need to consistently be patient until the judgment and the coming of the Lord. Even if there's oppression, and there's suffering to be had, we should take the prophets and Job as an example of suffering patience and patience.