

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Teaching (45 minutes)

Reviewing Last Week

Last week, we cover the first half of James. We went over his introduction to the book and talked about how trials are the central focus of the book.

James begins by describing trials of various kinds and how we as Christians should react to them differently than the world does. He also gave the keys that we must ask for wisdom when we face trials and that we must ask in faith.

We went through the trials of chapters 1-3a, trials like the trial of temptation, doing the Word, partiality, a living faith, and speech.

The Trial of Heavenly Wisdom ([James 3:13-18](#))

James 3:13-18 ESV

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

James describes the difference between worldly wisdom and heavenly wisdom. We show wisdom by the way we act.

Worldly wisdom is characterized by jealousy, selfish ambition, disorder, and every vile practice.

Heavenly wisdom, or wisdom from above, is characterized by purity, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, merciful, bears good fruit, in partial, and sincere.

James finishes by saying peacemakers harvest righteousness by their works. If you want to be righteous, you must have heavenly wisdom and be a peacemaker.

The Trials of Worldliness and Expecting Tomorrow ([James 4:1-17](#))

The Trial of Worldliness ([James 4:1-12](#))

James 4:1-4 ESV

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James begins chapter 4 by describing either a hypothetical situation or the actual attitude of some of his congregants. He said there are fights and quarrels among them.

His reason is that their desires are at war within them. He has very strong language for how they are reacting with one another.

He says the reason they do not have things is because they

- Do not ask in prayer
- Ask wrongly with wrong motives

James lays out another shocker, calling the members of his own church adulterers! He says this because they are trying to be friends of God and the world at the same time.

You cannot do. You are either a friend of the world or a friend of God. This is the trial of worldliness. We want to be like the world, but we need to be like God.

We need to want our relationship with God more than the momentary comforts of this world.

In [James 4:5-6](#), James says that God yearns over the Spirit He has placed within each person. He wants to have relationship with us. He quotes from [Proverbs 3:34](#) that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

He calls his congregation to be humble instead of proud.

James 4:7–10 ESV

Submit yourselves therefore 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. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

We are familiar with these verses but don't always realize the context is James is calling us to be humble before God instead of proud and arrogant in our ways.

He's calling us to have a "come to Jesus" moment. He calls people who want to be friends of the world and God "sinners" and "double-minded," a word he uses at the beginning of his book ([James 1:8](#)).

In [James 1:11-12](#), James returns to the theme of speech and says we should not speak against our brothers and sisters in Christ-72. To do so is to judge the law instead of being a doer of the law. He points out that there is only one Lawgiver and Judge – and we are not Him.

The Trial of Expecting Tomorrow ([James 4:13-17](#))

James addresses another problem with people in his communication. They expect tomorrow, presuming that they can do whatever they want and live as long as they want.

This is presuming that tomorrow will come. They make plans without the Lord in view. They decide they will do what they will do without seeking the Lord's approval.

James 4:15–17 ESV

Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

He gives the solutions of seeking the Lord's will instead of our own. It is not that we cannot make plans for the future. It is that we should include the Lord in our plans and seek His plans above our own.

Some Christians think they must always say things when they made plans and include, "If the Lord wills." But James is not saying we should have this formula we say every time we make future plans. He is saying we need to plan with God in mind.

Examples of this might be to plan for the future, but leave room for God to use you for ministry in your plans. He may have a divine appointment you could not possibly plan for as part of your day.

[James 4:17](#) seems to be a verse that does not fit here. But remember the context is present upon tomorrow. James is saying that the right thing to do is to plan what the Lord in mind. The person who knows this is the right thing to do but doesn't do it, to him it is a sin.

In a wider application of this verse, we could say that when we don't do what the Holy Spirit tells us to do, we are sinning. It can also be standards you have realized apply to your life by the Holy Spirit, but you do not keep such standards. That is a sin for you where it may not be a sin for someone else.

The Trials of Wealth, Suffering, and Afflictions ([James 5:1-20](#))

The Trial of Wealth ([James 5:1-6](#))

James 5:1-3 ESV

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.

James has a scathing rebuke for the wealthy. He always comes down the side of the poor throughout his letter. He probably favors the poor because they tend to be abused by the rich.

We should not gather from James that all rich people are ungodly or wicked, or that they cannot be saved. This is not so in the whole of the Bible.

This passage is about the attitude of the wealthy. They have a presumption that their wealth entitles them to treat others however they wish.

You don't have to be wealthy to have this attitude. The attitude is what James condemns more than anything else.

The Trial of Suffering ([James 5:7-12](#))

James 5:7–12 ESV

Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

James gives a closing argument of being patient in your suffering during the last days. He reminds us that the Lord is coming soon.

We must be patient about the Lord's return. We don't know when it is but we know it is a sure thing. Life can get hard and trials can be numerous.

He reminds Christians to not grumble against one another. He gives the example of the prophets in the Old Testament who were patient.

James uses the word "patient" three times, making this the focus of these verses.

The final paragraph of this section is a quote from Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount about swearing an oath ([Matthew 5:34](#)).

The Trial of Afflictions ([James 5:13-20](#))

James 5:13–16 ESV

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 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 one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins

to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

The last section of James' best letter deals with afflictions of sickness and suffering. This is one of the most familiar passages in James.

James recommends we pray if we are suffering and sickness while he prescribes singing praises when we are cheerful.

For those who are sick, James says we should

- Call for the elders of the church
- Let them pray – the prayer of faith described in [James 5:16](#).
- Let them anointed with oil – a tangible symbol of the Holy Spirit's power and work to bring healing
- Pray in the name of the Lord – with the authority of Jesus over the sickness

James has the expectation that if these steps are followed, the sick will be made well. There is no question of whether or not they will recover. They will.

He further explains what the prayer of faith is and out works. "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." The elders need to be righteous people. The person who prays for the sick must be a righteous person.

This means that when you pray for the sick, on your part, you must be righteous. You cannot be harboring sin or living in unrighteous ways. Your prayer will not work if this is the case.

That means if the person praying does not fulfill this requirement, it is because of them that the sick person does not recover. There is responsibility on both sides. The person praying must be righteous and the sick person must have faith.

If these stipulations are true, the prayer of the righteous person powerfully works to bring healing.

He gives Elijah as an example of a righteous person praying and faith. His prayer caused the rains to stop in Israel for 3 1/2 years and start again when he prayed again. If a righteous man could pray to stop the rain, a righteous person can pray to stop sickness.

I must also address that confession of sins to one another and praying for sickness are spoken of by James in the same breath. This is not unlike the Gospels where Jesus took care of both sin and sickness at the same time. Example: the paralyzed man. Jesus said, “Your sins are forgiven” and argued both are so easy for Him to do ([Matthew 9:1-8](#); [Mark 2:1-12](#); [Luke 5:17-26](#)).

James 5:19–20 ESV

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

James finishes his letter by talking about wandering from the truth and the person who rescues him.

Wandering from the truth could be to commit sins, but it is more likely wandering from the truth means wandering from the faith.

It seems that James is talking about someone who wanders from the faith by living in sin. The person who brings that person back “saves his soul from death” and “covers over a multitude of sins.”

James is not saying that you become Jesus to this person. You cannot save a human soul or be the atonement for sins. When James says you save a person’s soul from death, he refers to eternal death.

You’re the one who keeps a person from eternal condemnation by showing them the light and helping them come back to it.

Discussion (30 minutes)

Discussion Questions

What is the most challenging passage we have looked at from the second half of James? Why?

What are some ways we can keep ourselves from the lure of worldliness?

How does James view suffering? Does it seem like praying is the only answer and he is sort of okay with suffering in this life?

Application (10 minutes)

James for Today

What part of James has challenged you the most in your personal life? What can you do about it?

How do you respond to trials in your life like afflictions or suffering?

Is there anything in your life we can offer some wisdom on or pray with you for?