

James 26-09-23a

Greetings, this is Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is Wednesday night. It is the 23rd of September 2026.

We continue and conclude our study in the book of James tonight. It's been a wonderful study. We're going to continue our overview and summary of everything that we've seen.

We will begin by finishing chapter five and then draw our final observations and conclusions. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study. We'll begin.

Father, it is an unceasing source of encouragement and comfort and relief that we are sustained by your grace and we are not asked to live the life to which we are called in our own strength or by our own power. We're grateful for the Lord Jesus and all of the wonderful opportunities and potentials that belong to us because of his faithfulness, because of his unceasing and unending dedication to fulfilling your plan and purpose out of love for us and love for you. We pray that as we look at this concluding portion of the book of James tonight, that your Holy Spirit will guide us, help us to understand it, see its pertinence and its application in our lives.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. We are going to move rather quickly.

There is a lot that you may want to get in your notes. I would encourage you to perhaps just get the skeleton in your notes. Don't try to write every single thing down.

Remember there will be both an outline and a transcript posted after the study is complete and you can fill in anything that was too long to write by referring to those on the website. That said, let's pick up our study now in James chapter five. We have already seen the first four chapters.

You've seen the movement there. We reviewed last time the wonderful weaving and blending together of these themes as James addresses primarily different areas of subjectivity that plague us, distract us, and pull us away from faithfulness and obedience to the word. We need wisdom from God.

This strengthens us. It enables us to bridle the tongue. It enables us to manifest that wisdom that is peaceable and gentle and bears the fruit of righteousness.

We are drawn closer to God. We are drawn closer to one another and we are cleansed in our souls from the desires that create conflicts and frustrations, coveting, and these root sources of all kinds of sin, both personal and in and among members of the group. So that brought us to chapter five and we saw the second half.

Really I think chapter five should have begun at verse seven and the come now section in verses one through six should have been with the come now section in verses 13 through 17 of the previous chapter. But we saw the looking out the window at these, there's no brethren in these

two sections, but it is a reminder that these are the kind of people that it is dangerous to cultivate and make friends. This is friendship with the world and enemyship with God.

And so James doesn't describe them in the third person. He speaks to them as it were, not present and yet present conceptually and says, you are doing this. It is boastful and arrogant.

You ought to be dedicating your life to God's purposes. Then you would be in here in the group with us and not outside causing problems. And then in our passage, he says, you rich.

And we've seen how this theme of the rich has occurred time and again in the book. And their loss of status has already been described clear back in the first chapter. The rich should glory in their humiliation because it is coming.

So we saw that and we saw verses seven through 11 last time. Therefore be patient brethren until the coming of the Lord. James is heading for the landing strip here.

He's drawing his ideas together into conclusion. And all of this should be seen in the light of the impending return of the Lord Jesus. And as he emphasized, one of his first introductory themes was patience.

Testing of your faith produces patience. Let patience have its perfect work. So he calls for patience again in verses seven and verse eight and in verse nine, having that patience, having humility, having flexibility and the ability to control the tongue prevents us from grumbling against one another, criticizing and judging one another.

The judging is almost always represented with a strong verbal component. We want to talk about someone, damage their reputation, bring them down in the eyes and opinions of others. And do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned.

Behold, the judge is standing at the door. So we had a reference to the coming of the Lord in verse seven, a reference in verse eight, another in verse nine, a suggestion to take the example of speaking in the name of the Lord as another example of patience. Again, in verse 10, indeed, we count them blessed who endure back to the beginning, endurance, bear up under the testing that comes to us can be lemons to lemonade.

God can turn cursing to blessing. He can work all things together for good if we are the called and we remember it and we act like it. So you have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord.

Job couldn't see it. He was confused during much of the discourses that are recorded in that book, but the latter end of Job was more blessed than the beginning. And he was exceedingly blessed at the beginning.

This can be our experience. We can be blessed, comforted, encouraged, provided for in this life

and much more so multiplied in the ages to come. It's all a matter of how much faith we place in our heavenly father, how much confidence we have in the words and the example of the Lord Jesus that determines where we end up because the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

That brings us to verse 12. This was your homework. Why does he say above all in verse 12? What does the verse say? 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.

This seems like an odd left turn with all of the themes that we have seen up to this point. Above all, at the conclusion of the book, the summation here is don't swear. At first, it seems a bit off, but remember, if we stop and think about this for a moment, when we are under pressure all the way back to chapter one, let no one say when he is tested, I am being tested by God.

I'm being pushed toward evil by God. Let no one say. It doesn't say don't think or don't have some other verbal action.

It says, let him not say. One of the major themes throughout this book has been watch what you say. What we say is the overflow of the heart.

And if we're going to manage our speech, our conversation, bridle our tongue and bring our whole body into subjection, that is going to be the mark of the mature believer. Someone who has looked into the perfect law of liberty, metabolized it, digested it, integrated it into thought life, which will be reflected in speech and in action. So in a way, although it strikes our ear strangely, this is a summary of much of what James has been talking about.

Above all, my brethren, do not swear. Swearing is another verbal activity. You don't have to implement swearing.

What is the purpose of swearing? This isn't using words represented by symbols in cartoons, foul language swearing. This is endeavoring to reinforce our commitment to our words, a promise that we make by invoking things beyond ourselves. By heaven, by the gold on the altar, by this, by that, I'm going to reinforce and try to get you to believe me because I have placed my hand on a Bible and said, I promise, or I have invoked the life of my child or some other important aspect.

And by speaking of that, you should believe me even more than if I had just spoken the words over and over again. We're not going to dwell on this here because it's going to be a part of our summary of the themes of the book. But the key here is when he says, above all, everything is brought into subjection if you've got your speech under control.

So when you say a thing, if your character is such, your track record is such, your integrity is such that all you have to do is say, I will do that. I will be there. And it is better than any other person swearing by heaven, by earth, by the temple, by their children, or by any other seemingly important aspect, as though you can somehow make your words more true than if you just say

them.

If we come to the standard of a mature man, if we are telios, as we'll see in our review, our word is better than an oath. Don't cheapen it. Don't try to reinforce it in this way.

So don't swear. Let your yes be yes and your no, no. If you say yes, people can take that to the bank.

That is the most trustworthy promise on the planet. And all you did is say, yes, I will. No, I won't.

Yes, it's true. No, it's false. That should characterize us as believers.

And it summarizes and expresses and is symbolic of so many of these other truths. Who are we? Why are we here? What purpose do we serve? What goals do we strive to achieve? They should all be under heaven, characterized by the wisdom of God. So that is verse 12.

Now we have this final section, verses 13 through 20. This has engendered no end of agony. We are going to be able to cover it in about 10 minutes.

It is not that hard. James knows his audience has been listening for four and a half chapters. And this ending section is not hard, especially in the light of what we have seen in the previous context.

So verses 13 through 15, is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Where did this book begin? Are you tested? Are you having hardship? Pray. What did he say in chapter one? If you don't have the resources you think you need, ask God.

How do we ask God? We pray. If you're under pressure, he could almost put in parentheses, as I said at the beginning, ask God. No doubting.

Trusting fully. And wait for the provision. Anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.

Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. What are psalms? Hymns of praise to God. Recognize the source.

If you need something, the source is God. If you have been given something and your life is wonderful, you have an area where you're just cheerful when you look at it, sing a psalm. Remember the source.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Verse 14. Is anyone among you sick? Notice verse 13 is the individual.

The antidote to subjectivity subcategory eyes on self is objectivity. If you're in trouble, look to the Lord. If you're doing great, look to the Lord.

The antidote for subjectivity eyes on self is turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look at the wonders of the grace and glory of our Heavenly Father. Look at the tremendous privilege of the comforting, encouraging presence of God's Holy Spirit.

The best place to put our eyes when we take them off of ourselves is on the Lord, the Father, the Son, the Spirit, the revelation of all of the blessings that come from God given to us in the scriptures. Now we turn in verses 14, 15 to the group. Is anyone among you sick? Is anyone among you sick? What we're going to see in this remaining section is there are some proper uses of the tongue.

We have said many times the best way to break a bad habit is to not sit there and stare at that action or that activity or that temptation and say, I'm not going to, I'm not going to, I'm not going to. We turn, as Hebrews says, away from dead works and turn toward something, replace it with something. Change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God.

Change of mind away from talking out of turn, boasting about personal plans and achievements, judging others with the tongue. And instead, if there is something to talk about, is anyone among you sick? Let him, this is the sick person, call for the elders. Where do we turn if we're in trouble to our brothers and sisters in Christ, our spiritual family? Let him call.

This is a good use of the tongue. Instead of grumbling, complaining, thinking, is God punishing me for something? Call for fellow believers, preferably those who are mature. That's why it says elders.

Call for the elders, someone who's spiritually strong. Elders of the church and let them pray. Verse 13, got trouble? Let him pray.

Sick, go to the group and let them pray. Not just one person using his tongue, asking for wisdom, asking for strength and provision from heaven, but now the whole group. This is why we share our prayer requests with one another.

What a privilege. What a great thing. Got a struggle, got an area of testing, got a need of some kind, some pressure from one direction or another.

We take it to the Lord personally. If it continues beyond a reasonable length of time, take it to the group. Call for the elders.

I consider everybody in our group an elder. Need something? Share it with the group and we will go collectively to our Father in heaven in the name of the Lord Jesus and the presence and power of the spirit and lay it before him. It's like the artillery.

We say fire and forget. Loaded up the ammunition, aimed at the right direction, the appropriate kind of shell, the appropriate azimuth deflection, the appropriate elevation and fuse setting. Fired

it.

It's out of my hands. I've laid it before the throne of grace. I cast my cares upon him because he cares for us and leave it there.

There's an old gospel song. Take your burdens to the Lord. Leave it there.

I think it's burden singular. Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there. Rest.

Ask nothing doubting. If we doubt, you get back to that disukas, the double-souled individual. Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

In the earliest days of the church, remember, in my view, this is very early in the church age. The healing gifts are still in effect and the physical expressions of spiritual truth. Things like water baptism and anointing with oil are visible symbols because there's no New Testament yet.

And so these temporary rituals in many ways substitute for scripture and communicate visually and are memorable and can be explained in spiritual terms. What does it mean now to anoint someone with oil? We pray in the power of the Spirit and we ask God to use his Holy Spirit to comfort, encourage, bless, call to mind the truth for our fellow believers. We don't need an actual bottle of anointing oil.

Holy Spirit is the anointing oil and we can pray that God will work in and through our fellow believers in the presence and power of his Spirit, with the presence and power of his Word. So that's the anointing. And verse 15, the prayer of faith will deliver the sick.

Save doesn't mean salvation here. This is sozo, which means to deliver. In this case, whatever the sickness is, the affliction, the hardship, the difficulty, it doesn't have to be physical illness alone.

We need deliverance from all kinds of situations, all kinds of relationship issues, employment issues, financial issues, social issues, political issues, economic issues. We are compassed about. We are engaged in a spiritual struggle.

We wrestle against principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age. Our weapon collectively is prayer. Pray for one another.

All of us should remember the full armor of God. That stuff is individual, but we can pray that God will help us recognize if we dropped our shield or our helmet rolled down the hill and we need to go get it and put it back on. We've only got one of our two gospel of peace shoes on.

We can pray and that prayer will deliver the sick. Sickness here, as we've seen so many times recently, stands for whatever the issue is, whatever is trying to weaken us, slow us down, stop us from our spiritual fruitfulness and function. That's the sickness.

Pray. The prayer of faith will deliver the person from whatever that problem is and the Lord will raise him up. We pray God's power is infused into the situation and God will raise them up.

This is a promise that God will answer these prayers in the affirmative. May not be in the way that we expect, but God always works for our benefit and his glory always never fails. Even discipline is for our benefit.

No discipline seems like a joyful thing at the time, but it will afterward yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness. So pray. If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Why? Because he has come before the Lord in humility and you don't go to the Lord without acknowledging shortcoming, failure, malfeasance, missing the mark. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. When we come before God, one of the first things we do is acknowledge we are just people made out of mud.

We fail. We bring it before our Father. He forgives it.

He cleanses it. He separates it from us as far as the east is from the west. Now we are on a footing of opportunity and God will turn cursing to blessing.

Then in verse 16, we have this formal idea, confess your sins. And the better text, if you've got a text note there in your New King James, that's the better text. Therefore confess your sins.

It says to one another and pray for one another. This doesn't mean to tell people about the problems in your inner thought life. This is when we have sinned against one another.

I will go and confess to you, I was sharp. I was impatient. I spoke out of turn.

I said I would do something for you and I didn't, or I said I wouldn't do a thing and I did. I confess my fault. I only confess to persons what affects them.

We don't start standing up in the midst of the group and talking about fantasies and ideas that might have floated through our head that were sinful in nature. That is the devil's own work. But when we have sinned against God, we confess to God.

David says Psalm 51, against thee and thee only have I sinned. We acknowledge our faults to one another in order to heal the relationship so that there can be the kind of washing of the feet that Jesus did for his disciples in the upper room before the crucifixion. As I had done for you, you should do for one another.

So there's individual issues that need to be brought into the open, confessed, acknowledged, forgiven, and forgotten. So, pray for one another. Notice all of these are uses of the tongue.

This section opened with, above all, your word should be good. If you confess a fault, it's a real

thing. If you say, don't worry about it, I forgive that, it's forgotten, let's say no more about it.

Your word, you don't have to say, by heaven, I'll never bring it up again. You have said, you have spoken, we pray to God, we talk to one another, and it is entirely in the realm of truth. So, there's a wonderful thread of the proper use of the tongue after so much about don't grumble against one another and so on.

So, to the extent that we do damage to one another, we acknowledge it to one another and pray for one another that we may be healed. Once these things come out in the open, it isn't like, well, we had a cup of coffee, we explained that we messed up, and now everything is roses. It takes prayer to God in the same way that God engineers the healing of our physical bodies.

And in these days, it was often in a supernatural way, our relationships, our spiritual family relationships can be damaged and strained by individual sin. And it can be a two-way street, there's sin on both sides. We need the power of God to heal us in the spiritual realm, the members of the body of Christ, in the same way that God works in the members of our physical body.

So, we acknowledge that it is a God thing. We are not big enough and strong enough to repair this kind of thing. You see what happens when the world tries it in their strength, it doesn't work.

People harbor grudges and things fester and metastasize that they never get over. People say, I've got post-traumatic stress and I've never been able to get over some trauma. The power of God is greater than any of these things.

So, we talk to one another and we bring it before the Lord and we ask for healing. It's an active process and a good use of our tongues. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

And you see that the specific area, this is true in almost any area, but the context says praying for one another is effectual. And we should do it with fervency, with passion. Then he gives the example of Elijah.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. What does he mean by that? Remember, Elijah had some failures. Elijah got hot-headed and slew the prophets of Baal when God didn't tell him to, and that had consequences.

He ran in fear when Jezebel sent people to pursue him. He got discouraged. God had to encourage him a couple of times with food, and once he got that food in him, he went 40 days and 40 nights in the strength of that meat, as it says in King James.

But Elijah had his ups and downs. He had a nature like ours, James says. 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. Notice that the effectiveness of the prayer didn't depend on Elijah's complete consistency, never failing, never getting depressed, never falling short.

He fulfilled his function as a prophet in Israel, and there was a benefit. There was a disciplinary benefit when the rain was withheld, and there was a blessing benefit when the rain came. And Elijah was an agent of that.

So what I did in my Bible in this section to explain verse 12, above all, don't misuse your speech. Don't try to enhance it and emphasize it with oaths. Notice the verbs of being verbal.

Verse 13, let him pray. Verse 14, let him call. Verse 14, let them pray.

Verse 15, the prayer of faith. Verse 16, confess your sins. The effective fervent prayer in verse 16.

Verse 17, Elijah prayed. Verse 18, he prayed again. So this is all in contrast to back in verse 9, do not grumble against one another.

Grumbling summarizes all of the previous instances of judging one another, speaking harshly, and so on. The verbal conflicts that were represented by fights and wars. Then in verse 19, brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, let him know.

In English, verse 20, and the word him is a bit unclear. There are two hims, HIMs. One is the one that strayed.

The other is the one that turned him back. Which one do you let know the rest of this content? The one who turned him back. If you are able, this is one of the trickiest, most delicate, most difficult operations between believers that there is.

It is a tricky and delicate operation to speak to someone who is on a wrong road in such a way that they actually listen and turn around. We have to watch for the seeking note that someone is willing to consider a different point of view, recognize that the way they're going isn't producing a benefit, and gently, as James has done, James himself is a prime example of doing this. He has written this letter to turn others from a bad way, and he's done it so beautifully, using the third person, talking about him over there, if any man let him do this and that, and waiting to the appropriate moment to convert to the second person, you, and then to use the you to talk to third persons out the window, and then come back and exhort the brethren again.

It's such a beautiful, wonderfully constructed epistle, and he summarizes what he has done, and it's just given a wonderful example of in this last verse. So, someone among you has wandered

from the truth, and someone else turns him back. Let him, the last someone, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will deliver his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Deliver and cover. This harks back to verse 15. The prayer of faith will deliver the sick.

If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Those sins will be covered. You could just put verse 15 by that, but this is one of the most beautiful, one of the most mature, and one of the most carefully employed activities involving the tongue, is to be able to speak to someone who is on a wrong road, on a bad path, and gently, graciously employ the tongue to help them turn, help them see.

You can't just start at this point. You know what? Tomorrow, I'm going to go find somebody to correct from the error of their ways. Everything James has said, we've got to fix ourselves first.

We have to be humble. We have to be soaked in the wisdom that is from above, that is first peaceable and then gentle. And remember verse 18 of chapter 3, the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

You can put that verse next to this final claim in the book of James. Cover a multitude of sins, deliver a soul. This is the fruit of righteousness.

And what is the condition? It's everything that precedes verse 18 there in chapter 3. What a beautiful, practical, embraceable book. You just want to get up in the morning and read the book of James, remember these wonderful truths, and ask God to enable us to live them, to implement them, and to live in their light. Well, that concludes our verse-by-verse study of the book.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we are now going to pull everything together that we've seen in a summary fashion, and we're going to see something by way of connection with the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ himself as it is reflected in this book. It's a fascinating comparison, and I know you're going to enjoy it.

So watch for that when we come back from the break.