

An In-Depth Study of the Letter of James

[Part 9]

James 5:10-11 [NIV] *“Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.”*

It is always great comfort to know that others have gone through the trials and hardships that we as true Christians are facing.

Matthew 24:12-13 [NIV] *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”*

All of the prophets and people whom God has used to witness to their generation could **not** have fulfilled their commission from God without enduring patience.

It is the person who endures patiently to the end of their physical life who will be blessed and saved from eternal oblivion.

James highlights the example of Job, but when we read his life story he was far from passive in his patience.

Job had a torrent of questions directed towards God, using very passionate words.

The meaning of the word translated “endurance” is “*hupōmōnē*” describes a gallant spirit which overcomes the tide of doubt, sorrow or disaster without losing faith.

In fact such experiences only strengthen the faith in God of the person involved.

Job 13:15 [King James] *“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: ...”*

Job trusted God whatever life threw at him.

Job 16:19-22 [NIV] *“Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend. “Only a few years will pass before I go on the journey of no return.”*

Here we see the confidence that Job had in the Word of God, the soon-coming Jesus Christ who would intercede on his behalf as a friend.

Job 19:25-27 [NIV] *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”*

Convinced by the promises made to humanity by the Holy Spirit inspired prophets of God, and the examples of Abraham and other men and women of God; Job made this all-inspiring statement of faith.

Job’s statement is the foundation of all Christian faith and patient endurance.

The first coming of Jesus Christ as our Redeemer from eternal death and His Second Coming as Judge of all humanity and eternal Ruler.

It was for these future events God's servant Job [**Job 42:7-8**] yearned a great example for all Christians to follow.

There will be moments in our lives when all circumstances cry out that God has forsaken us, but if we cling to what remnants of faith that we have, at the end we will see that our Creator God is very kind and very merciful.

Hebrews 13:5 [NIV] *“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*

A quotation from **Deuteronomy 31:6, 8** a promise that God gave to His people.

Also the same promise made to Joshua [**Joshua 1:5-6**] as he led God's people into the promised land.

This is a promise we can cling to when we face a difficult future, as Joshua did, or the personal trials and pain Job endured.

From personal experience I know God may leave His intervening help to the last moment.

Just to test our patience and faith in Him, as He tested Job, Abraham and many other people who placed their trust in Him.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*

We have this promise directly from Jesus Christ, who comes into our lives through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ.

James 5:12 [NIV] *“Above all, my brothers, do not swear, not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes” be yes, and your “No”, no, or you will be condemned.”*

James is repeating the teaching of Jesus Christ. [**Matthew 5:33-37**]

The swearing is **not** what we call bad language but taking an oath to back up our words, or promises, in an honest society, which we as Christians should be exhibiting in our lives, there is **no need** of such oath taking.

A Christian's word or promise should be totally trustworthy.

It is only a person who has a reputation for exaggeration or lying who cannot get people to believe what they say or promise.

One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit working in our lives as Christians is *“faithfulness.”* [**Galatians 5:22-23**]

This applies to our words, promises and actions as a true Christian.

Matthew 12:34-37 [NIV] *“You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

The word translated *“careless”* is *“argōs”* meaning barren, or useless, with the implication of being lazy, **not** thought out before it is spoken.

Every Christian must remember that every word spoken is in the presence of our Creator God.

Psalms 139:1-4 [NIV] *“O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.”*

God even knows the thoughts that motivate the words we utter.

A Christian must have a reputation that will make oath taking unnecessary.

1 Timothy 3:7 [NIV] *“He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”*

This applies to every Christian so that Satan cannot use our bad reputation to blind people to the Good News of Jesus Christ we should be witnessing by our lifestyle.

There are many examples of such people of good reputation in the early church. [Acts 22:12; Acts 10:22; Hebrews 11:1-2; Hebrews 11:39; 3 John 12]

James 5:13 [NIV] *“Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.”*

The early Church was a singing church.

1 Corinthians 14:15, 26 [NIV] *“So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.” ... “What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.”*

Prayer and singing were a very important part of Church worship.

Romans 15:9 [NIV] *“so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.”*

Singing and praise was part of how the Church reached people who were not yet Christians.

Ephesians 5:19 [NIV] *“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,”*

Most likely it was the Old Testament psalms that were set to music.

That was this way in which the Church praised God and learned more about His character.

Colossians 3:16 [NIV] *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”*

Psalms are mentioned as being used to thank God for His many blessings.

James 5:13-15 [NIV] *“Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.”*

The early Church was a church that believed that God was a god that healed physical ailments.

Many must have personally experienced or at least seen the healing miracles of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 10:1-8 [NIV] *“He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”*

Jesus Christ intended this healing part of the work of love and compassion that the Church extended to all who came to it.

This gift of the Holy Spirit was given to selected members of the Church, in particular the apostles. [Acts 3:1-10; Acts 5:12-16; Acts 19:11-12]

The anointing with oil was used in two ways, an agent to assist the healing of wounds [Luke 10:30-34] but also symbolic of the Holy Spirit. [1 Samuel 16:13]

James 5:16-18 [NIV] *“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.”*

Many sins involve another person.

It is these relationship sins that are being referred to in these verses.

Such sins have to be confessed to both God and the person wronged before the two barriers can be removed, and the relationship restored.

Psalms 51:4 [NIV] *“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.”*

The sin of adultery which King David was confessing was against God only, this was not one that should be confessed before others, only God.

Bathsheba was also expected by God to make this confession for her personal part in the adulterous act.

A general confession of such an act would be causing infinitely more harm than good.

This passage of scripture also shows that there is no limit to the power of rightly directed prayer.

If we are having a struggle against a certain personal sin that is limited to our thoughts being wrongly directed [Matthew 5:27-28] then confession to a trusted friend, who will not spread such knowledge abroad, can help us in our battle against temptation, knowing that they are praying for us.

James 5:19-20 [NIV] *“My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.”*

Christian truth, because it is far more than intellectual knowledge but a way of life, is something that we can wander away from.

2 Corinthians 4:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we*

distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

The truth is something we as Christians have to display in our lives.

John 18:37 [NIV] *"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."*

The truth is something we are to testify to in our words.

1 John 3:18-19 [NIV] *"Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence"*

The truth is manifested in a life of love towards our fellow human beings and God.

John 3:21 [NIV] *"But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."*

The truth is expressed by the way we act in our relationships between other humans and God.

Christian truth is the way we live our Christian life.

Every Christian can in their life drift away from the course that love demands we steer in our lives.

If we rescue a person from a way of life that will lead to their death, we at the same time cover a multitude of our own sins.

God will forgive a person much who leads another back to Him.

Philippians 2:4 [NIV] *"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."*

Our concern for the spiritual welfare of others should be as great as it is for our own.

The highest honour God can give to a person who lays down their own life to lead another to God, is to look on that person as one who shares in the work of His Son, Jesus Christ who is the Saviour of all humanity.