



7 Prosperity Patience and Prayers

TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO

James Chapter 5 deals with three topics – prosperity, patience and prayer, though unconnected directly they all offer either a perspective and or hope when going through difficulties.

James begins the chapter warning rich people not to use fraudulent and unjust ways to grow prosperous. God hears the cries of those not receiving their due wages, as well as cries of the innocent condemn and killed by these people.

On judgement day, these unjust acts will come back and haunt the rich. James sounds this warning not just to the dishonest rich but to each one of us, *“Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire.”* (James 5:3)

James moves from ill-gotten prosperity to the value of ‘patience and perseverance.’

In verse 10 James writes *“Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.”* (James 5:10) Here James implies that being patient in the face of suffering is a choice a person makes, just like the prophets did who chose to speak God’s word despite troubles.

On the other hand, in v 11 ‘perseverance’ refers to patience in dealing with difficult conditions or situations. *“As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. (James 5:11)* For those who haven’t heard of Job, he was a person who almost overnight lost his wealth, his family and his good health. But, while it caused him tremendous distress, he persevered through it all without cursing or blaming God even though from a human perspective it would have been the most logical thing to do. In the end his perseverance was grandly rewarded by God who gave him back double of what he had lost.

James encourages those who were suffering to wait patiently with perseverance because all wrongs on earth will be corrected **ONLY** when Jesus returns. Three times in this passage James assures them that Jesus’ return is both definite and imminent.

To encourage Christians to be patient James uses farmers as an example and says while working they wait patiently between sowing and reaping. The nearest thing to farming for me is my wife Shammi’s gardening.

After Shammi plants a seed or a sapling, she waits. She does not dig up the soil daily or weekly to see the progress happening underground. While she waits to see the flower, vegetable or fruit of her efforts, she waters, repots, trims, and at times talks to her plants.

As Christians await Christ’s return, we need to take care of our spiritual garden - planting the soil of our heart with God’s word and nourishing it with obedience and prayer. Seasons of spiritual sunshine with mountain top experiences are interspersed with, seasons of bleak winter that can put out the flame in our hearts and making us ready to conclude God is distant and away.

But, with the patience of a farmer, we will find our lives yielding the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Remember during this period we are tending to our spiritual garden, watering, trimming and plowing it.

James then uses the patience of prophets who long suffered persecution for speaking in the name of the Lord as an example.

In fact, later James himself turns out to be an example, when he becomes one of the earliest martyrs who as Clement of Alexandria writes, *“was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, and was beaten to death with a club.”*

In the final topic, James deals with prayer as the answer to all the issues – troubles, sickness, sins, and even to bring back those who have strayed away.

I will dwell only on the passage dealing with intercessory prayer and healing found in James: 5:14-15.

“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.”

Many believe that James offers a blanket formula for praying for the healing of the sick. Some can start getting the wrong idea that there is some magical power in the ‘prayed over oil’ or in the laying of hands.

With other elders, many times I have prayed over sick people. At times, God has chosen to heal the person, at other times God chose to call the person home. To me healing is a mystery but I believe in it as I have seen it happen many times. A closer examination of this passage reveals the real key to James formula. Can you spot it?

Yes, elders, anointing the person and the prayed over oil are all important, but the key lies in the “prayer offered in faith.” What is this prayer of faith? After reading different explanations, my conclusion is it is a prayer offered according to the will of God.

Godly elders are needed to seek the mind of God and then pray according to His will. I also concluded that it is not one individual’s prayer but the body of elders seeking God’s will.

As our journey with James ends, here are a few questions to help us mature spiritually.

1. *Am I becoming more patient in the tests I face in life?*
2. *Do I linger with temptation or resist and flee from it?*
3. *Do I control my tongue?*
4. *Am I a slave to my prejudices?*
5. *Am I a person that others seek counsel and prayer support from?*

As we reflect and make choices in our life, may the Lord Jesus who James served bless us!

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