

**Good morning** ... As we begin our last look ...

into the book of James ~ we're going to start with a story:

Mr Thorne, also known as 'Mr T' had always wanted to travel

But he couldn't afford a big OE ~ when he was young,

So at 50 ~ he set out to see the world, and buy some souvenirs.

In various places, when he found something unusual,

He bought it ~ to remind himself,

of his ~ (one and only) ~ trip overseas.

He got very excited ~ when he found an ... **uncut Emerald**.

He took it to a local jeweller & said: 'Make me a beautiful ring  
but you'll need to be quick about it, because I'm travelling on'

He visited a number of countries ~ & reluctantly came home.

After a while ... he decided he'd better **insure**:

The more valuable items ... he'd bought.

The Insurance company, sent him to a particular jeweller,  
to have the Emerald ring, valued.

Mr 'T' expected ... a **substantial** value.

But the jeweller refused to value it ~ 'on the spot'.

They kept the ring a whole week. They took out the stone,

Studied it ~ weighed it ~ and wrote a report.

They also examined the setting, and added that to the report.

Then they reassembled the ring, and made out the bill.

When Mr 'T' came to collect it,  
he had to pay the bill ... before he got to read the report.  
**He was outraged !** He'd just paid, for the report,  
almost as much ~ as the ring was worth !  
He **demanded** to know ~ what they'd do about it.

The elderly jeweller ... picked up a box of matches.  
Struck one, let it burn down, then blew it out ... and said:  
'I'll give you ... **that whole tray of rings,**  
if you can make this match new again' !  
*'Don't be stupid ! ... that's impossible.'*

The jeweller said: 'From what you've told me,  
**Your emerald ~ had great potential.**  
But it takes time and skill ~ to study a gem ...  
and then decide how to cut it ~ to achieve the best results.

In that ring, you have perhaps ~ one third of the original stone.  
It's been hurriedly cut ... and then put into a cheap setting,  
that **detracts** from its value.

If you'd brought the original stone ... **home.**  
and allowed us the time to study it...  
and then ... cut & set it ... properly...  
You'd probably have ~ a valuable asset, to insure.

**This ring** ~ is little better than a cheap imitation,  
**But ~ like the match** ~ you **can't go back** and start again'!

**'Life'** ~ starts out **like an uncut gem** ... It has great potential.  
BUT the end result ~ reflects the care ... the competence ...  
and the Spiritual common sense ... of the owner.  
Along with the influence of parents, teachers, friends,  
In fact ... all those **entrusted**  
with making the natural stone ~ into a polished gem.

Sometimes ~ we refer to someone ~ as **a rough diamond !**  
We mean, he's **not submitted** ~ to those situations in life,  
that would've: *cut, & smoothed, & polished, his personality.*  
So the resulting character ~ **is not very attractive.**

**Fortunately ...**

Illustrations are never completely true ~ of real life.  
**'God' can ...** take a **man** ~ or a **woman**,  
and **modify** the attitudes ~ **alter** the motivation,  
and **re-develop** the personality ~ for His purposes !  
Just as He did ... for **Saul of Tarsus.**

**But ...** He will never **force** His will, upon us.  
*We have to be **willing** ... for His modifications.*

**Stop & think** ~ of the most **'Godly person'** you know of,  
Have they had a life of ease ~ and self indulgence ?  
**'No'... of course not.**

So, here's a 'quote' ~ to think about ...  
**'If there's nothing to endure/ you cannot learn endurance.'**  
(Wiersbe p. 168)

To extend the 'ring' **illustration** ... a bit further:  
Ladies ~ take a ring, with a beautifully cut diamond,  
Wear it in the dark, and what will you see ? ... Nothing !  
But take it out into the light ~ and move your hand,  
Now you see all its surfaces ~ all its **facets**, reflecting the light.  
It's **the light** ... that **reveals** its **quality** & it's **beauty** !

A hurried look ~ at what **God has revealed in his Word**  
gives us little ... to stop, and reflect on.

But when we **take the time** ~ to look into its meaning.  
We'll be rewarded ~ with **discoveries of truth** ...  
that have significant **application**, to every part, of our life !

James has been teaching ~ with considerable skill,  
**All those** ~ who are willing to study his letter.  
Not just ... the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christians !

**To remember, where we concluded last time,  
let's read from ch.5 vs7 & 8.**

A farmer ... is no ... '**Unthinking Idealist**'  
So he doesn't wait **patiently** ~ for something of no value !  
There is ... a **valuable crop** coming.

When the seed is newly planted 'in the ground'  
the potential crop ~ is **invisible**,  
BUT ... the farmer **knows** it's there.

He knows ... it will soon break through the soil ... & grow.  
In his mind's eye, he can imagine, how the harvest will look.  
He's completely patient ... about the time it takes,  
But he's attentive to the crop's needs ~ while it's growing.

Like the newly planted crop,  
**The Lord's Coming ... is not yet visible.**  
The idea is laughed at, & ridiculed ~ by those outside the faith.

James says: "**Be Patient ~ be confident**, trust the Lord,  
& keep weeding & watering ~ **the Harvest is certain.**  
Don't listen to *the unbelievers* ... No matter how *nice* they are.

**v9. Says: Don't grumble about each other,  
my brothers and sisters**

The '**grumble**' of v9 ~ reflects a 'lack of patience'  
Some people make a habit ~ of never being satisfied,  
and never wanting to wait ~ for the right time !

Do you remember the **cartoon**:  
That shows a person stamping his foot, and saying:  
'God ... give me '**Patience**' ... But I want it **now**' !

The last part of v9 says ~ **The Judge is standing at the door.**

(meaning) The Lord is hearing our words  
And understanding our attitudes !  
It's amazing ~ how many people imagine:

They can **do** ~ and **say** ~ and **think** ~ anything they please,  
But, God won't know about it, unless they tell Him.

Let's read ch.5: verses 10, 11

The Prophets of old, are examples of both  
**Patience and Perseverance**, in the face of difficult situations,

Often this included personal suffering ...

**for example:** Elijah, Isaiah, & Jeremiah ...

Were called to be ~ God's spokesmen,  
in the service of Kings ~ (and people) who were often:  
self-willed, & unwilling to be guided ~ or advised.

Job was an 'older man' ~ with a grown up family ...  
he had: **considerable** wealth, from his success in agriculture.

When suddenly:

**thro' no fault of his own,**  
everything went wrong !

When **bad news**, followed **bad news**, even **his wife** said: (2.8)  
**Curse God and die** ~ meaning: you have no future now,  
It can't be fixed ~ your situation is hopeless !

And Job's response ? **'You talk like a godless woman.**  
**Should we accept only good things, from the hand of God**  
**and never anything bad ?'**

**This is a very important question**, since the world around us commonly takes the attitude ~ that God **can't be good...if**

**He allows anything** to happen, that **we don't think** is 'good'  
Should **God's goodness** ~ be measured by **our standards** ?  
Or the other way around ?

Hearing of his terrible plight,

**Job's friends ...** came to show their sympathy.

It **must** be his fault ~ they decided.

He **must** confess, his **secret sin**. ~ The more Job denied it,  
the more determined they were ~ to find out the truth.

**Job's Comforters** fell into a common trap ~ when they concluded, that what is **sometimes** true ~ must **always be so**.

The OT talks about ~ God disciplining Israel in various ways, when the nation fell into **deliberate sin**. We read of it ... happening to **individuals**, to **groups**, and to the **whole nation**.

So the basic idea is valid.

God **could be** disciplining Job, for sin.

Job's friends say 'the evidence is clear, you've been caught out

Now make a clean breast of it ... and we'll pray for you,

We'll ask God to forgive you' ...

**But that was not** the case.

Job's story is not complete, without knowing the ending.

(In chpt.42:v7) The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite

I am **angry** with *you* ... and with *your two friends*,  
for you have **not been right ... in what you said about me**  
as my servant Job has.

My servant Job, **will pray for you,**  
and **I will accept his prayer, on your behalf.**

Read v12. ~ James makes just this one brief mention,  
of a common practise of the time ...

The people they lived amongst ~ often said things like:  
'By Jove ~ I'll **get even** with you ~ if it's the last thing I do,'

or 'By Jupiter ... I'll do this or that ...invoking the name  
of a Greek or Roman deity ... to **show** their determination.

The first 3 ~ of the 10 commandments say ...  
'No other Gods ~ No idols ~ and Not to misuse God's name'.

It seems ... these Jewish Christians were saying,  
'**Well** ~ since **Jove** and **Jupiter** are not real gods,  
it doesn't matter, if we talk like the people around us'.

However ... as Christians ~ we are '**a called out people**'.  
Called to obey ... to talk & do things ~ The Lord's way.

James says 'It's good to avoid saying things'~ where ...  
our Christian commitment...might appear to be compromised.

**lets read on now ...vs:13-20**

In this last paragraph of his letter, James emphasises ...  
our daily walk with the Lord, and our opportunities to share,  
And minister, to others.

With a strong reminder ... that Prayer ...  
is a **genuine communication** with the Living God

V13 ~ Tells us that whether we have trouble, or joy,  
the Lord is interested, the Lord cares ~  
So we should be talking to Him ~ about it.

We said before that **Job's Comforters** fell into a common trap  
deciding, that what's sometimes true,  
must **always** be so.

They assumed ~ that the **only** explanation ~ must be Job's sin !

This kind of reasoning ~ is not uncommon today,  
especially in the area of **sickness**.

Some people say ~ 'Jesus went about healing people'  
So that proves ~ God doesn't like sickness.

*Therefore ... sickness must come from the Devil !  
So ... Christians ~ shouldn't get sick ...  
there must be unconfessed sin ~ in their life !*

This teaching ~ is a mixture of half-truth and error.

It **doesn't** have Biblical support... But as you can imagine,  
It's caused huge emotional trauma for many Christians ...  
just as it did for Job.

The subject of sickness and healing is a huge one,  
so we can only deal with a few points today.

1. You probably remember ... your mother saying:  
'If you play with fire ...  
Sooner or later ~ you'll get burnt' !

Some sickness's are just like that,  
straight forward ~ 'cause and effect'  
If you drink **too much** alcohol,  
your liver will 'pack up'.

If you eat **too much** fat,  
your arteries can't handle it ~ and your heart gives up.  
Some sickness can be ... self-caused.

2. In a few **rare** cases in OT ~ God used sickness,  
In the form of Leprosy, (for example) to challenge someone  
about their **prolonged** ... and **deliberate sin**.  
So it was ... God caused.

4. It's certainly true that Jesus went about healing people.  
But most commonly ... when they asked for healing.

For example ... He went to the pool of Siloam,  
where many sick people were waiting for a miracle,  
And yet ... He healed ~ only one man.

The others lay about ~ and ignored Him ~ in contrast ...

Near Jericho, the blind man Bartimeus ~ called out:

‘Son of David ~ have mercy on me’

Jesus asked ... ‘what do you want me to do’?

& he replied ‘Lord I want to see’

Jesus said, ‘Receive your sight’

5. Paul tells us of a physical or medical problem he had,  
(He deliberately ~ didn’t say what it was)

He says ... “3 times I asked the Lord to take it away,”  
but each time the answer was:

‘My grace is sufficient, it’s **enough** for you’ (11 Cor 12:9)

Lets read: James 5:v14 once more ...

In the culture of the times, that James is addressing ...  
It was a common practise ... to anoint people with oil  
If they were sick ...

This was usually done, by the Priest from some local temple,  
he anointed the person, & then called on his Idol, to heal them.  
It was believed ... that this could ward off the evil spirits:  
that were causing the sickness.

6. Let’s not forget ~ that it was as **recently** as the 1850’s/60’s  
When Louis Pasteur ~ the French scientist,

First saw ~ tiny things **moving** on a microscope slide,  
And made the discovery, that there were **living** organisms,  
**Bacteria ...too small**, for the naked eye to see.

A lot of doctors, back then, just laughed at the idea !

James is concerned that as Christians ~ they should not be,  
calling in a Priest, from some local Temple.  
But calling ~ for their own church leaders to pray with them.

So the emphasis here ~ is not on **the oil** ~ as a cure.  
But on **the Prayer** to **our Lord, our God, our Saviour** (v.15)

And why does he mention **the Elders** of the church ?  
2<sup>nd</sup> part of v.16 says: **the earnest prayer of a righteous person  
has great power and wonderful results.**

**Notice ...** James does **not** say:  
that whenever we pray for a sick person,  
their healing is guaranteed !  
**If that was true, then we Christians, would never die**

V16 ~ reminds us that ... unconfessed sin ~  
can weigh heavily on the mind,  
and that's no way to come to God ~ asking for His favour !

But when someone opens up to us ~ and confesses ...  
their anger ~ their hatred ~ their bitterness ~ whatever,

We need to bring it to the Lord, for His forgiveness & healing.  
And then ... we who've heard, what's been troubling them.  
Need to **keep our mouths shut** !  
We must respect their privacy.  
Their confession ... **must not become** ... our 'juicy gossip' !

The last few verses: 17-20

Further amplify the significance of Prayer.  
And the importance of helping each other ...  
in our walk with the Lord.

**Finally** ~ listen to what David says in: Ps 66, (vs16-20)

Come and listen ... all you, who fear God,  
And I will tell you ... what He did for me.

For I cried to Him for help,  
Praising Him as I spoke.

If I had not confessed, the sin in my heart,  
My Lord would not have listened.

But God did listen !  
He paid attention to my prayer.

Praise God who did not ignore my prayer  
And did not withdraw His unfailing love from me.