

LIVING out LOUD

James

Studies in Practical Christianity

Session #8 Patience, Perseverance and Prayer

James Chapter 5 Verses 1-20

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.
Do what it says.” – James 1v 22*

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

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Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:

The book of James is often considered to be the most practical book in the Bible. Apart from the logical lessons of the Proverbs and, of course, the unavoidable challenges we find in the Sermon on the Mount that is probably true! As the half-brother of Jesus, James shoots from the hip; having witnessed firsthand what a life before God should be lived like, he speaks clearly with penetrating truths that leave little room to manoeuvre or excuse.

James wrote with divine insight that cannot be compromised. His epistle, written to scattered saints in need of encouragement, comes fresh upon each reading. Some books of the Bible require not only careful examination, but also careful interpretation, as different views can surface and political persuasions are formed. Not so with James. The challenge of this short book of 108 verses is not so much interpretation, but application! The meaning is all too clear and the challenge unequivocal. James' message throughout is clear: Practical Christian living reflects genuine faith that goes on to transform our lives. So says James, if you believe it, your life should show it!

The aim of this series is to highlight this teaching and the need to "Live it out Loud" personally and within our corporate context. James wrote to Jewish Christians facing all sorts of trials and who due to their heritage, were tempted to resort to the thankless task master of law keeping, rather than to Christ. James' message is clear: We are to aim for all that God intends us to be; not by merely verbalising a creed, or looking back to law, but by expressing a radical, counter cultural Christ-life that defies the wisdom and ways of this world. As a local church, we need to hear James' words again and heed their heart beat if we are to embrace all that Christ would have for us, both within the fellowship and as we reach out to those yet to see what genuine faith looks like: As God's people, may we learn to "Live out Loud" the truths we discover during the time we spend in the book of James.

LIVING out LOUD #8: Introduction

James draws his letter to a close by pointing out three disciplines every disciple must reckon with. Having consistently challenged his hearers to examine their words, attitudes and actions to see if they befit those of true disciples, he now reminds them what authentic faith looks like amidst the inevitable trials of life. James highlights patience, perseverance and prayer as ways to chart a godly course through choppy waters. Anyone desiring to live as a faithful witness and a genuine ambassador for Christ will face trials that regularly test the calibre of their Christianity.

The temptation to turn from Christ back to Judaism, to Rome, or simply to a more secular lifestyle was strong in New Testament times: The constant, aggressive threat of persecution from the authorities, the shameless exploitation of Christian employees (5v1-6), and the persistent pressure from family to renounce Christ were, for some new believers, crises that gave rise to worrying, wavering and even wandering from the faith (5v19). No doubt James had seen this many times, so he adds some final exhortations to bolster the potentially faltering faith of all who heard his words.

*Firstly, he mentions **Patience; the discipline of waiting on God and trusting in Him**, as an essential quality of the true believer. Neither champing at the bit, nor trying to force God's hand can bring about blessing or change. We are instead to patiently wait and watch for the Lord's return is imminent (5v7-8). **Again, perseverance is required from any who seek to live for Christ** (5v11). Pushing through pain and, like Job, enduring all manner of hardships is essential if we are to see what the Lord ultimately brings about. **The fuel that both inspires and enables us to keep going is prayer**. James points to a righteous life, where rising faith will avail much when we call upon the Lord (5v16). Praying has, as James recounts, always brought about surprising results! Ultimately James expects us to walk in truth, not wander from it and, as such, be characterised by true discipleship (5v19-20).*

May we conclude with James to persevere: An authentic Christian life will be tough and there will be setbacks. Likewise, may we cultivate patience; in affliction, in expectation, in all that God asks of us, trusting that our times are in His hands. Finally, may we be a prayerful people; living righteously, asking in fervent faith. These qualities are seen in all who are truly born again and, as James reminds us, are the bedrock that leads to breakthrough and blessing. If we genuinely seek to follow Christ, we must continually look to Him: Jesus' own example was, as James saw firsthand, one of patience, prayer and perseverance because of the joy that lay before Him (Heb. 12v2). So always seek to live out loud and let the joy of your salvation show!

Patience, Perseverance and Prayer

James reminds us that true faith exemplifies patience, perseverance and prayer! He assures us to hold on amidst trials, because the Lord is coming and is able to lead us through trials, into blessings and on to future glory.

1. V7-9: Patience: How we must look to Jesus and wait for His return

James calls us to look up and expect the Lord to return soon. Raised heads lead to raised hopes and the ability to endure as we wait for the Lord of the harvest.

2. V10-11: Perseverance: How we must keep going even when it hurts

Remembering the tortuous path trod by some of Israel's prophets and patriarchs, James reminds us that serving God is tough, but He is always faithful and for us.

3. V13-20: Prayer: How we must learn to speak with and for the Master

Prayer, says James, avails much. But, a righteous life, a faith-filled heart, an anointed touch and a willingness to confess are prerequisites to powerful prayer.

LIVING out LOUD:

- *Examine verses 1-6. What is James referring to here? How do you think it is relevant to what he goes on to say? How is it relevant for us today?*
- *Can you think of a time when you needed to be patient and wait upon the Lord? What was happening at the time? How were things resolved?*
- *What is the relationship between expectancy and patience in the Christian life? Try to think of some examples where both characteristics need to be employed. If we are striving for both, what do we need to bear in mind?*
- *Have you ever felt like giving up? Explain your answer.*
- *In your own words, define perseverance.*
- *How would you advise a young Christian to persevere? What would you point out that would help them to keep going?*
- *What are we to make of the "prayer offered in faith" (5v13-20)? What is the context of the passage? Is this a formula all should follow? Have you ever attempted to pray/be prayed for in this way? If so, what happened? What must we bear in mind when praying like this?*
- *As we end our time in James, re-read the letter, making a note of all the things that spoke to you most. What stands out? Take some time to pray and ask the Lord how you can apply these truths and continue to "live out loud" in authentic faith and devotion to Christ.*