

James 5 - Instruction & Warning for the Rich; Wisdom in Patient Endurance, Prayer, Restoring an Erring Brother

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James 5

(4) Wisdom in the use of wealth (5:1-6)

(A) Predicted judgment upon rich oppressors (5:1-3)

1 Come now, you **rich people, weep and howl** for **your miseries** which are coming upon you.

1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.

1 Now listen, you rich people! Cry and moan over the miseries that are overtaking you.

1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

- "...rich people" - this is the third passage in this epistle dealing directly with those who are rich (Cf. 1:9-11; 2:1-12). The rich are called out so much in James and the rest of Scripture not because God hates or is against them, but because they are the most likely to live independently from God.

— Jesus counted some rich people as His followers (Zaccheus, Joseph of Arimathea, Barnabas), which demonstrates that He is not partial against the rich. What He is against are the rich who replace Him with their riches. God supplies our riches, but He doesn't want us to fix our hope on the riches He has given us and use them to allow for boasting (Cf. 1 Tim 6:17).

— Riches bring an entire realm of temptations that are not present to the poor: a false sense of security, a desire to control others, a lack of need for God in daily life, and personal pride. Those who succumb to these temptations are not as well off as they think they are.

- "...weep and howl" - this is something an OT prophet would say, but it's strange to our ears to "weep and howl" because we are rich. What it basically means that when you're rich, you think you're in great shape, without a care in the world because of your riches, but little to you know what is just around the corner.

— When we find our security in our riches, our retirement account, our investments, our home, any material thing, we're setting ourselves up for judgment. That judgment is described in v2-3.

— Specifically, James is speaking to the prosperous Pharisees and Sadducees, who oppressed Jewish believers (2:6-7). The reason they were to "weep and howl" is because the 70 AD judgment is coming soon and it would destroy their wealth.

- "...your miseries" - James portrays the "miseries" that are coming upon the rich he is referring to as unavoidable—it was already too late to avoid it, it is coming no matter what; it is the "last days" (v3).

— James is pointing ahead to the "next life," and warns that they will "weep and howl" because the next life for them will not be as it is for them today...those who they are

oppressing will be on top, and they themselves will be in a place of torment (doctrine of reversal).

2 Your riches **have rotted** and your **garments have become moth-eaten**.

2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.

2 Your riches are rotten, your clothes have been eaten by moths,

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten.

- When the day of judgment comes (70 AD), riches will be of no help to these people (or anyone for that matter). These people were banking on their riches being of some value to them on the day of judgment...but they won't be.

- "...have rotted...have become" - the verbs in this verse (and "have corroded" in v3) are all in the Greek perfect tense (prophetic past tense) in which a future event (the judgment of 70 AD) is looked upon as a past act.

— Biblical writers used this form of verb (a past tense) when speaking about a future event because the event was so sure and guaranteed to happen that they could comfortably refer to it in the past tense even though, when James wrote this, the event was ~20 years away.

- "...garments" - clothing was one of the most popular forms of wealth in the 1st century. People used clothing to pay for things, and they were also heirlooms and valued presents.

- "...moth-eaten" - valueless

3 Your gold and your silver **have corroded**, and their corrosion will **serve as a testimony** against you and will **consume your flesh like fire**. It is in the **last days** that you have stored up your treasure!

3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

3 your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be used as evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up treasures in these last days.

3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

- "...have corroded" - perfect tense (see note on v2). Gold and silver do not rust; this was James' way of saying that their gold and silver (riches) will become worthless for them in the day of judgment

— This rust, accumulated from non-use, will function against them as an adversarial witness exhibiting their failure to use monetary wealth for the benefit of others (unfaithful stewardship). Instead, they were hoarded, demonstrating no love for their neighbors.

— The emphasis is on the foolishness of hoarding in light of coming judgment. They did not realize that they were living in the last days before the judgment of 70 AD, and continued to

violate the teachings of Jesus in Matt 6:19,21.

- "...serve as a testimony" - their riches (gold and silver) will testify against them because it was attained through oppression of someone else (v4-6)

- All of those who put their confidence and sense self-worth in their money, it will be of no help to them on the day of judgment. In fact, the more they have the more it testifies against them because they obtained it through oppressing others.

- These people thought they were storing up treasure on the earth, but what they were really doing is storing up wrath for the next life.

- "...consume your flesh like fire" - while James was written to Jewish Christians outside of the Land, here James uses an illustration from outside of his audience, which is clearly unsaved people.

- As believers, the only burning we will experience is of our works (1 Cor 3:10-15); we will never experience the burning of our flesh in judgment. Our *works* will be tested by fire to test their quality.

- "...last days" - pictures a dam overfilled with water...shortly it will break. For James' audience, it is the "last days" before the dam breaks (the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem judgment is revealed).

- This is a reminder of Gen 15:16, where God said, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." Judgment was coming on the Amorites eventually, but not today because their iniquity was not yet complete. But one of these days, the volume of water behind the dam will be so great that you can't stop the dam from breaking. This was the predicament for these wealthy oppressors.

- These rich oppressors were "storing up wrath for themselves" (Rom 2:5)

Jesus Himself gives us a solution to the corrosion/rust in Matt 6:19-20:

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

"Storing up treasure in heaven" means to use all that we have (that God has given to us) as stewards of God's wealth.

Hoarding, as used by James here, means accumulating wealth just to have lots of it, not for security, but for prestige and self-gratification. It is difficult to know how much one should set aside for emergencies that may arise in the future (security). And it is easy to rationalize that we need to save more than we really do. Where saving stops and hoarding begins is difficult to determine. It is really a matter of the heart. How we feel about giving away what we have is a good guide to our heart attitude toward our possessions.

It's easy to become envious of the wicked rich when you see things from a human perspective...here I am obeying the laws, doing what's right, working hard, but I don't get ahead. These guys are getting rich doing nothing, or getting rich while trampling on others. However, once you see it from the eternal perspective, you stop envying the wicked and start feeling sorry for them. Read Ps 73:3-12,16-20: v3-12 is from an earthly perspective; v16-20 is from an eternal perspective.

(B) For reasons for coming judgment (5:4-6)

(a) Unpaid wages (5:4)

4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which **has been withheld** by you, **cries out against you**; and **the outcry** of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of armies.

4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the **Lord of Sabaoth**.

4 Look! The wages that you kept back from the workers who harvested your fields are shouting out against you, and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of the Heavenly Armies.

4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

- Some of James' readers were evidently getting rich by cheating their hired laborers out of their wages (Cf. Deut 24:15)

- "...has been withheld" - *apostereō*, the perfect tense indicates that the laborers will never get their salaries

— These workers' meals were dependent upon their daily pay (Cf. Matt 20:1-16). Because of this, withholding pay from them was specifically prohibited in the Mosaic Law (Lev 19:13; Deut 24:14-15) and the prophets (Jer 22:13; Mal 3:5).

— Our God is a "blue collar" God; He is constantly looking out for the rights of the worker.

- "...cries out" - *krazō*, a loud cry or shout; the money itself cries out for vengeance against this injustice

- "...the outcry of those" - of both the money that was not paid and the unpaid laborers themselves

— After Cain killed Abel, the "voice of Abel's blood" cried out to God, and God answered. When injustice happens, we think God either doesn't see it or doesn't care. The wealthy oppressors are banking on the fact that God doesn't see it, but Scripture is clear that God sees it all, and they'll receive their "payday" at some point.

- "...Lord of Sabaoth" [NASB95] - lit. The Lord of Hosts or The Lord of Armies—used in the OT; hints of judgment (Rom 9:29; Cf. Is 1:9). It refers to the Lord's heavenly angelic armies, describing God as the Warrior, the Commander-in-Chief of all heavenly armies.

— The use of this title was to give these unjust rich a sober warning. The God of might and power and judgment has heard the cries of the unpaid, which is not a good thing for these people.

— God has infinitely numerous means for governing the world, defending His followers, and punishing the wicked.

(b) Wanton luxury (5:5)

5 You have **lived for pleasure** on the earth and lived luxuriously; you have **fattened** your hearts in a day of slaughter.

5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

5 You have lived in luxury and pleasure on earth. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter.

5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

- "...lived for pleasure" - implies extravagance and waste

- "...fattened" - a farmer "fattens" his animals to get them ready for slaughter; these wealthy oppressors are doing the same thing by obtaining riches through ill-gotten gain.

— In their greedy materialism, the rich fatten themselves figuratively, and sometimes literally, not realizing that they are preparing themselves for the "day of slaughter".

— All wealth is owned by the Lord (Ps 50:10). He permits us to be stewards of His wealth for His glory.

Jesus said, **"Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one is affluent does his life consist of his possessions."** (Luke 12:15). ***Luxury and self-indulgence has a way of ruining character.*** Money is not sinful; it is neutral. But "Love of money is the root of all evil." (1 Tim 6:10).

"Thou shalt not covet" is the only commandment that deals with motivation rather than visible practice. It is a sin of the heart. Abraham was a rich man but maintained his faith and character. When his nephew Lot became rich, it ruined his character and ultimately ruined his life. "If wealth increases, do not set *your heart on it.*" (Ps 62:10c). "A good name is to be more desired than great wealth; Favor is better than silver and gold." (Prov 22:1). Riches are always accompanied by uncertainties. The only certainty is that of God's judgment (v9).

(c) Condemnation of the innocent (5:6)

6 You have **condemned and put to death** the righteous person; he offers you **no resistance**.

6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you.

6 You have condemned and murdered the one who is righteous, even though he did not rebel against you.

6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

- Sinful progression: selfishness > hoarding > fraud > self-indulgence > over-indulgence

- "...condemned and put to death" - the rich are so desperate to maintain their extravagant lifestyle that they will do anything to sustain it.

— James may have used "put to death" hyperbolically, as in v2. Many Christians have experienced persecution from people who are trying to guard or advance their own financial security (Cf. Acts 8:18-24; 19:23-28).

— On the other hand, if a laborer was not paid in those days, it could lead to death. It was a very serious to not find work or not be paid. This is why James personifies the laborers salary as the very blood of the exploited workers crying out for justice.

— The laborers die because they pour out their strength in their work, but the fruit of their work does not come back to them. They cannot regain their strength because the rich withhold their wages, thus they could not eat. This is why James condemns the rich for putting the laborers to death.

- "...no resistance" - the laborers only resisted righteously, not violently

In 2 Sam 11:15 David told his general to place Uriah in the front of the fiercest battle, so that Uriah would be killed in battle. David did this to cover his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. Nathan, when he confronted David about his sin, told him a story (2 Sam 12:1-7) about a rich man oppressing a poor man. David's anger burned against the rich man and said he deserved to die, and make 4-fold restitution. David was livid, then Nathan told David that he was that rich man.

There is a burden of anxiety in getting riches, there is anxiety in keeping riches, there is temptation in using riches, and there is mortal danger in abusing riches. And there is the burden of the account we must give concerning how we used our riches. Riches are not an end of life, but a tool to living.

It is good to have the things that money can buy, provided you also have the things that money cannot buy. What good is a \$1,000,000 house if there is no home? Or a million-dollar diamond ring if there is no love? Are you buying things we don't need, with money you don't have, to impress people you don't like?

(5) Wisdom in waiting for the Lord (5:7-12)

(A) Example of the farmer (5:7)

7 Therefore **bepatient**, brothers *and sisters*, until **the coming of the Lord**. **The farmer waits** for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

7 So be patient, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious crop from his land, being patient with it until it receives the fall and the spring rains.

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

- "...be patient" - *makrothymesate*, self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong

— In other words, because the Lord's coming is near (v8; Cf. Mark 13:32-37; Phil 4:5; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 2:18), believers should not take matters into their own hands and retaliate for offenses that they have experienced (i.e. not being paid for work rendered), nor should they try to get rich at the expense of being faithful to God.

- "...the coming of the Lord" - a veiled Rapture reference

— James does not point to any signs that must precede the Rapture (Cf. John 14:3; Titus 2:13; 1 John 3:2-3; 1 Thess 4:15; 1 Cor 15:51 [note "we" in the last two references as Paul includes himself]. The idea is to wait for the Lord's return in wisdom.

— "coming" - *parousias*, a common term used to describe the visit of a king to a city or province of his kingdom

- "...The farmer waits" - James now gives examples of patience in daily life...his first example is the farmer. Farming takes both patience and faith...you don't put a seed in the ground and get a crop in 15 minutes. It takes time, it's a process, it doesn't happen right away.

— The farmer does not give up or get discouraged when the crop does not come to harvest immediately. He continues to work, even when the crop cannot be seen at all. The farmer also depends on many things that are far outside of his control, such as the weather and precipitation/rain.

— James' use of a farmer as his illustration also includes the fact that during this life, we are primarily sowing and cultivating, sometimes not seeing any progress, and not merely reaping rewards (harvest). This sowing and cultivating requires both patience and faith.

The secret of strategic patience is to keep focused on the imminence of the Rapture. Some Greek scholars believe that "long-suffering" refers to patience with respect to persons; and "endurance" refers to patience with respect to circumstances.

David was troubled by the prosperity of the wicked (Ps 37:35-36). In this same Psalm, he also gave the same advice that James gives: "Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; Do not get upset because of one who is successful in his way, Because of the person who carries out wicked schemes" (Ps 37:7).

(B) Impact of imminency (5:8-9)

(a) Strength (5:8)

8 **You too be patient**; strengthen your hearts, for **the coming of the Lord is near**.

8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

8 You, too, must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, because the coming of the Lord is near.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

- "You" - these commands are given to believers (Cf. v7, "brothers *and sisters*")

- "...too" - James is drawing from the example of the farmer (v7)...just as the farmer is patient from the time he plants the seed until harvest, we, too, must be patient while waiting for the Lord's return.

- "...patient" - *makrothymesate*, second command to be patience in this life as we expectantly wait for the coming of the Lord. The belief in the imminent return of Christ should effect our patience; we demonstrate that we believe in the Lord's imminent return through our patience.

— If you don't have patience in traffic or patience with other people, maybe it's because you are not considering the imminency of Christ's return. You don't want the Lord to come back when I'm in an impatient, carnal state.

— Just as a farmer is patient while waiting for the harvest, we should be patient waiting for Christ's return, knowing that our reward (harvest) lies ahead, as God has promised (Cf. Matt 6:20). James point is that the waiting and need for endurance in the Christian life is very much like the waiting of a farmer:

- He waits with a reasonable hope and expectation of reward.
- He waits a long time.
- He waits working all the while.
- He waits depending on things out of his own power; with his eye on the heavens.
- He waits despite changing circumstances and many uncertainties.
- He waits encouraged by the value of the harvest.
- He waits encouraged by the work and harvest of others.
- He waits because he really has no other option.

- He waits because it does no good to give up.
- He waits aware of how the seasons work.
- He waits because as time goes on, it becomes more important and not less to do so.

— The rich who behave like typical rich people either do not have or have lost sight of this hope. They only live to accumulate as much here and now as they can.

- "...the coming of the Lord" - a reference to the Rapture

- "...is near" - *engizō*, at hand, close by; imminent. An event that *must* happen or *could* happen today is considered "near". The verb tense is the third person singular perfect active indicative, the exact same parsing used in the Offer of the Kingdom (Cf. Matt 3:1-2; 4:17; 10:5-7).

— This is a reference to the imminence of the Rapture; see [Doctrine of Imminency](#). The imminence of the Lord's return is not a "pie in the sky" doctrine, it is designed to have a real, daily impact in the lives of believers.

— In this verse, James outlines that the doctrine of imminency should impact both our patience and our strength. We have strength for the next day if we walk in the belief that Jesus can come back at any time.

— If you go through the NT and mark every reference to the coming of the Lord and the use made of that teaching about His coming, almost without exception it is followed by an exhortation to godliness and holy living. [Walvoord]

(b) Abstention from complaining (5:9)

9 Do not complain, brothers *and sisters*, against one another, so that you may not be **judged**; behold, **the Judge is standing right at the door**.

9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

9 Do not complain about each other, brothers, or you will be condemned. Look! The Judge is standing at the door!

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

- Notice that James takes the imminent return of the Lord at the Rapture much further and applies it to our daily lives. If we fully believe that the Rapture is imminent, and that the Judge is standing right at the door, how should that affect our daily lives?

1. Be patient (3x in v7-8) - if I allow the doctrine of the Rapture to affect my life, I should be more patient with things and with people. James is saying that if you aren't a patient person, you don't understand the imminent return of Christ.
2. Do not complain (v9) - if I understand that Jesus could come back at any moment, I won't be a person who complains all the time

3. Patient in suffering (v10) - if I understand that the Judge is standing right at the door, I will be more patient during suffering/trials

— There is much more to the teaching of Bible prophecy (eschatology) than just making sure you have your end times prophecy chart filled out correctly. Bible prophecy should have a positive affect, a positive impact on our daily lives and our daily walk with Christ (Cf. 1 Peter 3:10-11; 1 John 3:2-3).

- "Do not complain" - what is forbidden is not the loud and bitter denunciation of others, but the unexpressed feeling of bitterness or smothered resentment that may express itself through a groan, sigh, or "rolling of the eyes".

— Scripture treats complaining, grumbling, and murmuring as a serious spiritual issue because it reflects unbelief, ingratitude, rebellion against God's providence, or dissatisfaction with His provision. Examples include:

- Examples of Israel's complaints & God's judgments
 - Ex 15:24: after crossing the Red Sea and being rescued from the pursuing Egyptian armies, the Israelites immediately began complaining about lack of water; God provided 12 springs of water after Moses threw a tree into the water.
 - Ex 16:2-12: the Israelites grumbled about lack of food in the wilderness; God provided manna from heaven
 - Ex 17:1-7: the Israelites complained about lack of water; God provided water from a rock.
 - Num 11:1-3: general complaining; God sent fire to consume the outskirts of the camp
 - Num 11:4-34: Israelites complained about the manna and desired the food in Egypt; God sent them quail to eat, and a severe plague.
 - Num 14: Israel complains after the spies' report; God pronounces judgment for that generation to die in the wilderness
 - Num 16: After Korah's rebellion, the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron; God sent a plague and over 14,000 die.
 - Num 20:2-13: Israelites complain about water again; this leads to Moses' anger and eventual exclusion from entering the Promised Land
 - Num 21:4-9: Israelites again complain against Moses and Aaron; God send fiery serpents among them inflicting severe pain.
- Passages reflecting on Israel's complaining
 - Deut 1:26-27: "You murmured in your tents..."; their complaints revealed unbelief in God's promises
 - Ps 78: Repeatedly recounts Israel's complaining and unbelief
 - Ps 95:8-11: "Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah (Cf. Ex 17:1-7); recalls Israel's rebellion and God's oath that they would not enter His rest

- Ps 106: 24-27: "They murmured in their tents and did not obey the voice of the LORD."
 - NT warnings based on Israel's example
 - Heb 3:7-19: "Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." A warning for Christians to not repeat Israel's unbelief.
 - Heb 4:1-11: Continues the warning of 3:7-19, urging believers to not fall due to disobedience as Israel did
 - Jude 16: "These [false teachers] are grumblers, malcontents..."; complaining is presented as a characteristic of ungodly people
 - Direct NT commands to not complain
 - 1 Cor 10:10: "Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were killed by the destroyer." In this passage (v6-10), Paul recounts for the Corinthians five failures of the Israelites in the wilderness as a warning to the Christians in Corinth (and us!). One of these five is to not complain as the Israelites did.
 - Phil 4:14-15: "Do all things without complaining or arguments;" In this verse, "complaining" [*gongysmos*] is a secret displeasure not openly avowed/spoken. It's the very *thought* of a complaint, not verbalized, that Paul is talking about here.
 - James 5:9: "Do not complain...so that you may not be judged." God will judge complaining because at its base level, it reflects a lack of faith (Cf. Heb 11:6).
 - 1 Peter 4:9: "Be hospitable to one another without complaint." Hospitality, a spiritual gift given to some by God, along with all other spiritual gifts, should be used and exercised without complaint.
- "...judged" - God judges complaining? Yes, just see the Book of Numbers (14:2; 16:41, et al). The Israelites complained both horizontally (about one another, or one of God's leaders unjustifiably) and vertically (against God Himself).
- In Num 16, Korah and his group complained against Aaron, one of God's chosen leaders, and God became angry and the earth opened and swallowed them up, sending them to *Sheol* (death).
- God obviously judges complaining, so it will be embarrassing at the *Bema* seat judgment if I'm constantly in a mindset of complaining.
- "...the Judge is standing right at the door" - the picture James paints of the imminence of Christ's return is that He is standing behind a closed door, with His hand on the door handle. He could open the door at any minute.
- This reinforces the doctrine of the imminent return of Christ. The first century church was taught and believed that the judgment of believers would take place soon. They expected Jesus to return imminently (at any moment).
- If Jesus could return at any moment, without any prerequisite conditions, then it follows that He will return before the seven-year Tribulation period, which Scripture says must

precede His second coming to establish His kingdom on the earth. Thus, the Rapture is distinct from the second coming, separated by at least seven years.

In light of the concept of the imminent coming of Christ and the fact that the NT does teach His imminent coming, we can conclude that the pre-Tribulational Rapture view is the only view that comfortably fits the NT teaching of the imminent return of Christ. It is the only view that honestly says that Christ could return at any moment because it is the only view that teaches that Christ will come to Rapture the church before the 70th Week of Daniel begins, and nothing else must happen to trigger His return. [Renald Showers]

(C) Old Testament examples of patience (5:10-12)

(a) Prophets (5:10)

10 As an example, brothers *and sisters*, of **suffering** and **patience**, **take the prophets** who spoke in the name of the Lord.

10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord.

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

- "...suffering" - *kakopatheia*, the suffering of evil; only use in the NT (Cf. Mal 1:13)

- "...patience" - *makrothymesate*, self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong.

Third use of this word in four verses (Cf. v7,8,10).

- "...take the prophets" - James pivots from an illustration of a farmer to the OT prophets as an example of suffering and patience. The OT prophets endured hardship, yet practiced patient endurance.

- Jeremiah endured mistreatment with patience. He was put in stocks (Jer 20:2), mocked and ridiculed for proclaiming God's message (Jer 20:7-8), thrown in prison (Jer 32:2), and lowered into a miry dungeon and left to die (Jer 38:6), yet he persisted in ministry.
- Micaiah courageously prophesied against King Ahab, despite knowing it would bring trouble upon himself. He was struck in the face by a false prophet (1 Kings 22:24). Ahab ordered him imprisoned and fed meager rations (1 Kings 22:27). Through all of this, Micaiah refused to alter God's message, even when pressured by the king's officials.
- Daniel was targeted by jealous officials and thrown into the lion's den for continuing to pray to God (Dan 6). Yet he did not retaliate or compromise his devotion, but quietly continued to be faithful.

- Elijah was hunted by Queen Jezebel after confronting the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19:1-2). He spent time alone, in hiding, suffering from discouragement and loneliness. Though overwhelmed at times, Elijah continued serving God and obeying His direction.
- Amos was opposed by priest Amaziah and told to leave the kingdom and stop prophesying (Amos 7:10-13). But Amos reaffirmed that he was sent by God and continued to deliver God's message.
- Zechariah (son of Jehoiada) was stoned to death in the temple court after rebuking the people and King Joash for their unfaithfulness. His final words entrusted judgment to God rather than seeking personal vengeance.

— The NT presents the persecution of the prophets as proverbial (11x): Matt 5:12; 21:35-36; 22:6; 23:29-37; Luke 13:33; Acts 7:51-52; Rom 11:3; 1 Thess 2:15; Heb 11:32-38; Rev 16:6; 18:24.

(b) Job (5:11-12)

11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is **full of compassion and is merciful**.

11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful.

11 We consider those who endured to be blessed. You have heard about Job's endurance and have seen the purpose of the Lord—that the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

- Job is the perfect example of endurance, not patience. He was not always patient, in fact he showed much impatience, yet he did determine to endure whatever might befall him as he waited for God to clear up the mystery of his suffering (Cf. Job 13:10,15; 16:19-21; 19:25).

— The person who is blessed is not just the person who is persecuted and suffers, but the person who endures through the suffering. After Job lost everything (health, wealth, family), his speech was above reproach. Job 1:22 indicates that through all this, Job did not sin nor blame God.

— In fact, after Job's wife told him to "curse God and die," Job replied that she spoke as a foolish woman, and that we should accept adversity from God just as we accept good from Him (Job 2:9-10).

— God blessed Job for his attitude and perseverance through suffering and persecution (Cf. Job 42)

— James 1:12 indicates that such a person who endures through suffering and persecution for Christ's sake will be given the Crown of Life at the Bema Seat judgment of Christ. Note that James says you must be "approved" to receive this crown.

- "...full of compassion and *is* merciful" - God's compassion and mercy is not immediately obvious in the story of Job. At first glance, it appears that God was cruel to Job, but upon further examination, God was indeed incredibly compassionate and merciful:

- He only allowed Job to suffer for a very good reason
- He limited the pain that Satan could inflict on Job
- God sustained Job throughout his entire ordeal
- In the end, God used Satan to bless Job. Job was a better man and more blessed after his suffering than he was beforehand

Why do some of those who proclaim the Lord, such as Job, endure difficult trials? So that their lives might back up their messages...endurance counts. ***Faith is not believing despite the evidence; it is obeying in spite of the consequences.*** God never wastes the sufferings of His saints. After his suffering, Job met God in an even deeper way (Job 42:1-6).

12 But above all, my brothers *and sisters*, do not **swear**, either **by heaven or by earth or with any other oath**; but **your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you do not fall under judgment.**

12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.

12 Above all, brothers, do not swear oaths by heaven, by earth, or by any other object. Instead, let your "Yes" mean yes and your "No" mean no! Otherwise, you may fall under condemnation.

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

- "...swear" - swearing is an evidence of impatience. Of all the manifestations of impatience in times of stress, the most frequent are explosive utterances (profanity) and making hasty, irreverent oaths.

— When we become impatient, we tend to say things that are better left unsaid: profanity, abusing the Lord's name, personal attacks, or appealing to heaven, earth, or whatever else as confirmation that we're telling the truth.

- "...by heaven or by earth or with any other oath" - James' point is that we should never need to use an oath to tell someone "this time I really mean it." Instead, we should always "really mean it." We should be men and women of our word.

— This command does not prohibit believers from ever taking an oath, but is a warning for taking an oath rashly.

— It's also a warning about swearing truthfully, and having such a reputation that your word is true and it does not require you to swear on something bigger than yourself. Essentially, James is telling believers to not swear to something greater than yourself to convince the person you're making an oath that you're reliable.

— James again stresses that a person's speech provides the most revealing glimpse of his spiritual condition.

- "...your yes is to be yes, and your no, no" - swearing on something higher than us in order for someone to believe we're speaking the truth is a telltale sign that our integrity is under question. The need to swear, beyond a simple and clear "yes" or "no" betrays the weakness of one's word.

— Straight-forward, honest speech – our reputation should be such that when we say "Yes" or "No", the person can take it to the bank. Our integrity rather than our oath should be enough to convince others that we are speaking the truth.

— James here is quoting Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:33-37). Either James (an unbeliever at the time) was there to hear Jesus' sermon, or Jesus told him this at a later time.

- "...so that you do not fall under judgment" - this lack of character will be exposed at the judgment seat of Christ. This should be a motivation for us to prepare for that judgment by speaking with integrity.

An impatient Christian is a powerful weapon in Satan's hands. Moses' impatience robbed him of a trip to the Promised Land; Abraham's impatience led to the birth of Ishmael; Peter's impatience almost made him a murderer.

(6) Wisdom in prayer (5:13-18)

(A) Types of prayer (5:13-16a)

(a) Afflicted: prayer of dependence (5:13a)

(b) Happy: prayer of praise (5:13b)

13 Is anyone among you **suffering**? *Then* he must **pray**. Is anyone cheerful? He is to **sing praises**.

13 Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

13 Is anyone among you suffering? He should keep on praying. Is anyone cheerful? He should keep reciting psalms.

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

- "...suffering" - *kakopatheō*, afflicted, encountering difficult circumstances; when life is "just not going your way"
- In context, if you work hard and are not being paid (Cf. v1-6), prayer to God and patience is the proper outlet for feelings of sadness, not lashing out and profanity.
- "...pray" - the first type of prayer offered is one of dependence on God; there are circumstances in your life that are larger than yourself, that you can't solve, and you're afflicted or suffering because of those circumstances.
- So when you are suffering (enduring hardships in life), the proper response is to pray...instead of complaining (v9) or swearing (v11)
- It's easy to become discouraged during these times, but Jesus tells us to not lose heart during these times (Cf. Luke 18:1) and pray (5:13). Paul prayed a prayer of dependence to keep him humble (after, 14 yrs earlier, he was caught up to 3rd heaven and heard incredible revelations, 2 Cor 12:7-8).
- God can transform troubles into triumphs. He can turn weakness into strength (2 Cor 12:7-10; James 4:6). It is impossible to persevere through the hardships in life [*kakopatheō*] without prayer.
- "...sing praises" - elsewhere in the NT refers to public worship; singing songs in public with musical accompaniment
- James gives the same advice to the person suffering and the person who is cheerful: take it to the Lord. The dual use of "he" (third person singular) in this verse puts the responsibility for praying or singing praises on the person who is suffering or cheerful.

Different situations or circumstances should result in different types of prayer. We don't go around praying in the same format all the time (Cf. Matt 6:7). The types of prayers that we pray are dependent upon the circumstances. Here, James describes five different circumstances that result in five different types of prayer.

(c) Sick: prayer by the elders (5:14-15)

- 14 Is anyone among you **sick**? *Then he must call for the elders of the church* and they are to pray over him, **anointing** him with **oil** in the name of the Lord;
- 14 Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;
- 14 Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they should pray for him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.
- 14 Is any sick among you? 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:
- "...sick" - *asthenai*, weakness; times of spiritual weakness or physical sickness are times where it is very difficult for us to be patient

- "...he" - the person who is sick "must" summon the elders of the local congregation to pray for them; again, in the third person singular (Cf. v13).
- "...must call" - *proskaleō*, an imperative; this is a command, not a suggestion
- "...the elders of the church" - a specific group of men; not the pastor, not the deacons, not your Sunday School teacher or your small group leader.
- How many times have you seen someone who is sick and rather than call for the elders to come pray for them, they send out a general request for prayer from their friends, family, and church members?
- This doesn't mean that we shouldn't pray for the healing of other believers and just leave it solely to the elders (Cf. "pray for one another," v16).
- The fact that James instructs the ailing or exhausted person to call for the elders gives a clue that this person's sickness somehow connects with some spiritual condition.
- Note that James did not tell his readers to call for someone with the spiritual gift of healing. Although James was written in the late 40s and Paul had not yet defined for us the spiritual gifts that would operate in the church.
- "...anointing" - *aleiphein*, means to "rub" or "massage" rather than anoint. it's not the typical Greek word for "anoint" used elsewhere in the NT [*chriein*]. It's a medicinal term (Cf. Matt 6:17, to prepare oneself); here it seems James is assuming its application as a medicine.
- Note that the overall emphasis of this passage is on prayer, not on the anointing with oil. Don't get the priority and importance of the two mixed up, as many people do. "Pray" is the main verb, "anoint" is a participle. The anointing with oil is a secondary action to prayer.
- "...oil" - symbolizes healing and the Holy Spirit; anointing with oil in James' day was the equivalent of applying medication (Cf. Mark 6:13; 1 Tim 5:23).
- Some people take this verse as a formula for guaranteed healing...if I'm sick and I go to the elders, God will "raise me up" and my sins will be forgiven
- That's not exactly what James is saying: James is not giving us a formula, that if followed, will result in healing 100% of the time. We have to match this verse up with other teaching in Scripture (1 John 5:14; 1 Tim 5:23; 2 Tim 4:20).
- Here, James is referring to those circumstances where it is the Lord's will to heal someone

There are no blanket formulas: we're dealing with the sovereignty of God. It is a cruel hoax to teach that none of us are ever to be sick. Those who claim that God heals in every case, and that it is not His will for His children to be sick, are denying both Scripture and experience. Paul had to leave Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Tim 4:20); Epaphroditus was "ill and almost died" (Phil 2:27); Paul prayed three times for his own healing (2 Cor 12:7-10) but had to endure it until he died.

15 and the **prayer of faith** will **restore** the one who is sick, and the Lord **will raise him up**, and **if he has committed sins**, they will be forgiven him.

15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

15 And the prayer offered in faith will save the person who is sick. The Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

- "...prayer of faith" - prayer is an act of faith because we rarely see an instantaneous result; we're often praying for God to give us an invisible result. The "prayer of faith" is a prayer presented with confidence in God's power and ability to heal if that is His will in this case (Cf. Matt 8:1-13; Mark 5:35-42).

— When we're praying, we're often tempted about whether it is really working and effective. We think, I have a thousand other things to be doing right now, is this the best use of my time?

— There is no basis in Scripture for the idea that praying in faith means praying with confidence that something will happen just because we pray (Cf. 1:5-6; 2 Cor 12:7-10). Faith must always have the Person or promise of God as its object to be effective.

- "...restore" - *sosei*, save, make well (Cf. Matt 9:21-22; Mark 6:56)

- "...will raise him up" - this does not refer to the resurrection of the person after their die. Nowhere in Scripture is our future bodily resurrection conditioned on prayer.

- "...if he has committed sins" - the implication here is that this sick person is in this situation because of some type of sin in their life. Sometimes sickness is attributed to sin; some people become sick because of sin in their lives. This is apparently the specific situation in James command here.

— Jesus healed the paralytic who had been in bed for 38 years; after the healing, Jesus told him to "go and sin no more" (John 5:14), implying that his sickness was caused by sin. This is the same cause as the person described by James.

- However, not all sickness is caused by sin:

- Job even offered burnt offerings for the sin of his sons; he was blameless. However, when struck by Satan, he became sick (Job 2:7-8).
- In John 9, Jesus and the disciples ran across a man blind from birth. The disciples asked Jesus who sinned, this man or his parents, to cause this man's blindness? Jesus told them neither, but so the works of God could be displayed in him.
- Paul had constant physical sickness (Gal 4:13; 2 Cor 12:7-8)

— If we land on the fact that if someone is sick because of sin in their life, we take on the thought pattern of Job's counselors (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar & Elihu). They were certain

that Job's sickness came from unconfessed sin.

1 John 5:14: This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, **if we ask anything according to His will**, He hears us.

- But it is not always God's will to heal us...

1 Tim 5:23: Do not go on drinking only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and **your frequent ailments**.

2 Tim 4:20: Erastus remained at Corinth, but **I left Trophimus sick at Miletus**.

Gal 4:13: but you know that it was because of a **bodily illness** that I preached the gospel to you the first time;

2 Cor 4:16: Therefore we do not lose heart, but though **our outer person is decaying**, yet our inner *person* is being renewed day by day.

(d) Sinful: prayer of mutual confession (5:16a)

(B) Power of prayer (5:16b-18)

(a) General statement (5:16b)

16 **Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another** so that you may be healed. A prayer of a **righteous person**, when it is brought about, **can accomplish much**.

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

16 Therefore, make it your habit to confess your sins to one another and to pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

- "Therefore" - in view of the possibility of spiritual and physical sickness following sin, believers should confess their sins to one another. This *may* avoid sickness.

- "...confess your sins to one another" - we confess our sins to God for forgiveness and cleansing, but there may be a special circumstance where we need to confess a sin to another person (the person sinned against).

— If you sinned against someone directly, you should rectify the situation first before you come to worship the Lord (Matt 5:23-24). You should remedy the situation horizontally first, then you can worship vertically.

— It's important to put this instruction into context because it can be quoted outside of its meaning to urge someone to do something that might not be good. For example, this verse

does not command us to confess sin beyond the circle of that sin's influence. Private sin requires private confession; public sin requires public confession.

— Is confession of sin to another a divine law? No, it is an offer of divine help for the sinner. Nor is it a requirement for healing.

— "confess" - *exomologeō*, to confess openly; to acknowledge fully. It's a different word than "confess" that we see in other verses [*homologeō*], which means "to say the same thing".

— When *exomologeō* is used of sin (Cf. here; Matt 3:6) the focus is on openly expressing or admitting that sin. When *homologeō* is used of sin (Cf. Rom 10:9; 1 John 1:9), the focus is on agreeing with God's assessment of our sin.

— This verse says nothing about getting to God only through priests, or that we should confess our sins to a priest, which is how some denominations (and Roman Catholicism) interpret this verse. "One another" [*allēlōn*] is a plural pronoun that does not refer to priests (Cf. 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 9:15), it refers to a reciprocal confessing among the laity: I confess to you, and you confess to me.

— If this verse was meant to institute the confession of sin by the laity to the priest, then shouldn't the priest also be confessing his sin to the laity?

— The Roman Catholic practice of confession to a priest was not made obligatory until the Lateran Council of 1215 under Innocent III (the most murderous pope in history), which ordered that every adult should confess their sins to a priest at least once per year.

- "...pray for one another" - feeling compassion for them is a good first step, but don't let your compassion end there—it must be translated into prayer. We can intercede for them in prayer without even letting them know that someone is interceding for them.

- "...righteous person" - all believers are righteous positionally but that's not James' point here. He is referring to practical (experiential) righteousness: believers who keep short accounts with God (habitual confession and repentance), and are moving in the direction of spiritual growth (maturity). Essentially, a Christian whose practice is catching up with their position.

- "...can accomplish much" - here is our reminder about how powerful prayer really is—it is far more power than we think. In prayer, we are availing ourselves of the infinite power of God.

- God does not promise to bless a man, a method or a movement, but He does promise to bless two things: His Word and prayer.

[Ps 66:18; 1 Peter 3:7]

(b) Example of Elijah (5:17-18)

17 Elijah was **a man with a nature like ours**, and he **prayed earnestly** that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for **three years and six months**.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

17 Elijah was a person just like us, and he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, and rain never came to the land for three years and six months.

17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

- James refers to Elijah's experience to illustrate the limitless power of prayer. Elijah prayed and it stopped raining for 3.5 years in Israel (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1,41-45).

- "...a man with a nature like ours" - Elijah was not super-human, he was a regular guy walking with the Lord. He just happened to pray, and those prayers brought about powerful results.

— He had a sin nature, he had the same limitations as we do, he got discouraged just like the rest of us. In fact, he got so discouraged he wanted to die (1 Kings 19:4). Yet he knew the power of prayer.

— The lesson here is that Elijah is no different than you or I except that he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and God answered his prayer. We have the same power through prayer that Elijah had. Answers to prayer are within the reach of every believer.

- "...prayed earnestly" - *proseuche proseuxato*, "he prayed in prayer." Some commentators have translated it "made it a special matter of prayer." This is not a call for fervent prayer as much as it is a call to pray period.

— Elijah influenced God in the outworking of His decree by means of his praying. God allows us to influence Him in how He controls some events through prayer, as well as in certain areas of His will. One of these areas is how He deals with Christians who have departed from His will.

— He confidently made prayed for God to change the weather because he was conscious that it was in harmony with the will of God. He could confidently pray for rain (1 Kings 18:42-44) because he knew that God had promised to send the rain he was asking for (1 Kings 18:1). He persevered in prayer because he knew his prayer was in harmony with the expressed will of God.

- "...three years and six months" - same timeframe as given in Luke 4:25

18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

18 Then he prayed again, and the skies poured out rain, and the ground produced its crops.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

- After the famed confrontation with the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel, the nation needed rain. He prayed and sent his servant seven times until a little cloud appeared and the rain

came (1 Kings 18:42-45). Persistence is essential.

When the Scriptural teaching that prayer is a definite means of working with God is apprehended, we feel that this is fully in keeping with His gracious character. God yearns to take His sons into His confidence and let them share with Him the accomplishment of His purposes. He has so arranged this world that there is a definite place for answered prayer in the divine government. He deliberately so constituted things that His believing children may have, and we are invited to have, a definite share in the fulfillment of His saving purpose with mankind through intercessory prayer. The Scriptures are replete with illustrations of how the cause of the Lord was furthered as God answered the prayers of His people. [Constable]

(7) Wisdom in restoring an erring brother (5:19-20)

(A) Necessity of warning an erring brother (5:19)

19 My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you strays from the truth and someone turns him back,

19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,

19 My brothers, if one of you wanders away from the truth and somebody brings him back,

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

- "My brothers *and sisters*, if anyone among you" - two phrases that undoubtedly categorize the instruction here, as in all of James' epistle, to believers.

— James is going to explain that is the the responsibility of other believers to bring back an erring brother or sister in Christ to fellowship so they could resume living by faith (Cf. Ezek 33:1-9; Gal 6:1).

- "...strays" - *planao*, to err or wander; from which we get the word "planet," a heavenly "wanderer." It describes a person who turns from the faith they once professed.

- "...from the truth" - from anything that James commands or admonishes his readers about in this epistle, including earlier in this chapter.

- "...someone" - demonstrates that God uses human instruments (other believers) to turn sinners from the error of their ways.

— The reason why God uses human instruments is because it brings Him more glory than if He were to do it Himself. God is an skilled workman who makes incredible things using the worst of tools.

— With this in consideration, if we as believers refuse to make ourselves available to God's service, we are in fact robbing Him of some of His glory.

- There is a time and place to get involved in the life of a wandering believer, but it's a delicate operation.

— Jesus was likely referring to this in Matt 7:1-5...Jesus didn't say not to remove the speck from your brother's eye, He just said to make sure that the log is out of your own eye so that you can see clearly.

— Essentially, when we embark on helping a backslidden believer get back on track, we need to make sure that we do so with the utmost care and precision. Anything related to the eye requires great care, otherwise the person could go blind. This is the illustration that Jesus gave: when we confront a sinning believer, we must do so with great care.

- "...turns him back" - practices the process outlined in Matt 7:3-5; 18:15-20; Gal 6:1 to lovingly and carefully confront the person about their sin, without hypocrisy or arrogance of any sort, with the goal of repentance and restoration.

Gal 6:1: Brothers *and sisters*, even if a person is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual are to restore such a person in **a spirit of gentleness**; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you are not tempted as well.

(B) Blessings of warning an erring brother (5:20)

(a) Salvation from a premature death (5:20a)

(b) Covering a multitude of sins (5:20b)

20 let **him** know that the one who has turned a sinner from the error of his way will **save his** soul from **death** and **cover a multitude of sins**.

20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

20 you may be sure that whoever brings a sinner back from his wrong path will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

- "...him" - the "someone" who turned back the one who strayed (Cf. v19)

- "...save" - *sōzō*, to rescue from danger or destruction; doesn't refer to salvation/justification (*soteria*) here. Here it means to turn someone around to rescue their soul from *death*, not hell.

— The Greek word *sōzō* can mean salvation from hell in other contexts, but many times it is used to indicate being saved from danger or destruction (Cf. Phil 1:19; Heb 11:7). How you interpret *sōzō* depends on the context in which it is used. The context here is that they are actually "saving" them (sparing them) from divine discipline (Cf. Heb 12:5-11), up to and including Maximum Divine Discipline .

— Maximum Divine Discipline is God taking a Christian's life prematurely because of the destruction that they are bringing to their own life and/or other people's lives (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor 11:30; 1 John 5:16; Rev 2:22-23)

- The common misinterpretation of "save his soul from death" in this verse is that if you turn a believer away from their sin, you have prevented them from losing their salvation. So if this doesn't mean that you can lose your salvation, then what does it mean?

— What happens to a believer who has turned their back on the Lord, stopped believing and is living like the world? They start to face death at a temporal level (not an eternal level), because the wages of sin is death (Cf. Rom 6:23; Gal 6:8; Prov 13:15; the life of David post-1 Sam 11).

- "...his" - the "sinner"

- "...death" - *thanatos*, doesn't always mean eternity in hell; the Bible uses the term "death" in many different ways. In the widest sense, it includes all the miseries arising from sin.

— In this instance, James may be referring to "maximum divine discipline" (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor 11:30; 1 John 5:16; Rev 2:22-23), or he could be referring to the concept of temporal death, which would've been a concept very familiar to Jewish believers in the 1st century.

— Temporal death is the concept that a believer can go off into sin and it will wreck all kinds of things in your life, but at the same time it doesn't mean you're not a Christian.

Examples of temporal death in Scripture include:

- Covenant curses (Deut 28:15-68)
 - The Mosaic Covenant was clear about covenant blessings and curses. The curses outline the concept of temporal death.
 - Even though Israel experienced most if not all of the curses because of their sin, they never stopped being God's firstborn son.
- Proverbs is filled with the concept of temporal death (2:18; 5:5; 14:12; 21:16)
- Life of David (2 Sam 12:10)
 - While David's sin brought temporal consequences (death), when he died he was ushered straight into heaven.

— An example of temporal death is that you go out today and max out all your credit cards and take on other unsustainable debt. By doing this, you aren't sending yourself to hell, but you've brought "death" to your future financial prosperity.

— So if you go to a believer who is wandering away from the Lord, under God's gracious power and with the delicate care of an eye surgeon, and turn that person back to the Lord, you have saved that person from a lot of David-like temporal consequences that they will experience in their life (had they continued down that path).

- "...cover a multitude of sins" - if you're effective at your ministry of turning someone around who was backslidden, you have cut off habitual patterns of sin in their life. You have "covered" (prevented them from committing) a number of sins that they otherwise would've gone on to commit had you not lovingly intervened.

— Sometimes the most loving thing to do for another believer is to confront them under God's grace about their sin in the hope that they will heed the warning and repent so they are spared ("saved") from David-like temporal consequences (Cf. 1 Peter 4:8)