

**Lesson 9**  
**James 5**  
**Trouble, Patience and Prayer**

**Memory verse:** “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4 NIV).

If money talks,” said a popular comedian, “all it ever says to me is goodbye!” But money was not saying goodbye to the men James addressed in this section of his letter. These men were rich, and their riches were sinful. They were using their wealth for selfish purposes and were persecuting the poor in the process.

One of the themes that runs through James 5 is “trouble.” We meet poor people deprived of their wages (James 5:4), as well as people who are physically afflicted (James 5:13–16) and spiritually backslidden (James 5:19–20). A second theme that James introduced is “prayer.” The poor labourers cry out to God (James 5:4). The sick and afflicted should pray (James 5:13–16). He cited Elijah as an example of one who believed in prayer (James 5:17–18).

When you join these two themes, you arrive at the fifth mark of the mature Christian: he is prayerful in troubles. Instead of giving up when troubles come, the mature believer turns to God in prayer and seeks divine help. The immature person trusts in his own experience and skill, or else turns to others for help. While it is true that God often meets our needs through the hands of other people, this aid must be the result of prayer.

James did not say it was a sin to be rich. After all, Abraham was a wealthy man, yet he walked with God and was greatly used of God to bless the whole world. James was concerned about the selfishness of the rich and advised them to “weep and wail.”

James was still addressing the suffering saints when he wrote, “Be patient.” This was his counsel at the beginning of his letter (James 1:1–5), and his counsel as his letter came to a close. God is not going to right all the wrongs in this world until Jesus Christ returns, and we believers must patiently endure—and expect.

Three times James reminded us of the coming of the Lord (James 5:7–9). This is the “blessed hope” of the Christian (Titus 2:13). We do not expect to have everything easy and comfortable in this present life. “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). Paul reminded his converts that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). We must patiently endure hardships and heartaches until Jesus returns.

James used two different words for patience. In James 5:7–8, 10 it was the word long-tempered. The words endure and patience in James 5:11 literally mean “to remain under” and speak of endurance under great stress. Patience means “to stay put and stand fast when you’d like to run away.” Many Greek scholars think that “longsuffering” refers to patience with respect to persons, while “endurance” refers to patience with respect to conditions or situations.

The gift of speech is a marvellous blessing, if it is used to the glory of God. As we have seen, James had a great deal to say about the tongue, and this chapter is no exception. He mentioned some of the lowest uses of the tongue: complaining (James 5:9) and swearing (James 5:12). But he also named some of the highest uses of the tongue: proclaiming God’s Word (James 5:10) and praying and praising God (James 5:13).

Prayer is certainly a high and holy privilege. To think that, as God’s children, we can come freely and boldly to His throne and share with Him our needs! Seven times in this section James mentioned prayer. The mature Christian is prayerful in the troubles of life. Instead of complaining about his situation, he talks to God about it, and God hears and answers his prayers. “Taking it to the Lord in prayer” is certainly a mark of spiritual maturity.

Things to learn: 1) The trouble with wealth    2) Examples of patient endurance 3) Answers to prayers.

**Discussion Questions:**

1). How did James exhorted the rich in verses 1 to 6 as regard to their wealth?

2). Discuss the examples given in verses 7 to 12 for Christians to experience the kind of patient endurance as they wait for the Lord to return.

3). James encouraged us to pray which is the mark of a maturing Christian. Describe the four situations in which God answers prayer found in verses 13 to 20.