



THE BOOK OF JAMES

SECTION THEME

In this section, James is going to focus a lot on patience in suffering as he delivers his final exhortation/encouragement in this letter.

GO DEEPER

Learn more about suffering in the following Bible verses.
2 Corinthians 4:7-10; Romans 5:3-5; 1 Peter 4:1-2; 1 Peter 4:12-13

What do these passages teach about suffering as a Christian?

What similarities do you see between Romans 5:3-5 and James 1:2-4? According to these verses, what are the benefits of suffering?

Does it help to think of our mortal bodies as "jars of clay"? What does Paul mean by that?

Peter suggests that suffering actually frees us from "human passions" (1 Peter 4:2). **Why would that be?**

What does it mean to "participate in the sufferings of Christ" (1 Peter 4:13)? Do people who suffer get to know Christ better?

JAMES 5:7-20

7Therefore 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.

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

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

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

11We 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.

12But 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.

13Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone

cheerful? He is to sing praises.

14Is 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;

15and 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.

16Therefore, 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.

17Elijah 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.

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

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

20let 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.

DIGGING IN

- James is talking a lot about patience (using the word four times in four verses). **According to verse 7, what did people need to be patient about?**
- Remember that this was the first generation of Christians. When Jesus ascended to heaven, some surely expected Him to return in a week or a month. When the delay stretched on for years, some were losing hope—especially when life was getting more difficult for Christ-followers.
- **What analogy does James use in verse 7?**
- **Have you ever planted a vegetable garden? How long does it seem to take from when you first plant the seeds to when you get to bring in the first ripe vegetable and cook it up?**
- **How does this experience compare to waiting for Jesus' return?**
- But these believers weren't just waiting, they were suffering. We know from history that there was growing opposition to the Jesus movement from Rome and from those Jews who did not follow Jesus.
- **James says in verse 11 that those who persevere through suffering are "blessed." What does he mean by that?**
- **How do you feel about that idea?**
- **Flip back to James 1:2–4. Would someone read that for us?**
- **How does that fill out your idea of the blessedness of suffering?**
- **Have you ever heard suffering referred to as "the human condition?" What does that mean?**
- **Is it true? Is suffering part of what it means to be human?**
- Suffering is such a common, but certainly not trivial, part of life that it's everywhere you look.
- **What other types of suffering have you seen or even experienced?**
- **What kind of encouragement does James give us here? Who were his examples?**

5 MARKS FOCUS: PRAYER

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice. Pray that the Lord would reveal where you can put this into practice and that he would give you the boldness and strength to do so.

USE 2 OF THE FOLLOWING APPLICATIONS IN YOUR WALK THIS WEEK:

Gut-Level Prayer: Sometimes when you're suffering, praying can be difficult—especially if you're trying to mind your manners with God and pray correctly. Remember that prayer is open and honest communication with God. Take Job's example and let God know just how miserable you are, just how angry, sad, scared, or confused you may be. Tell Him exactly how you feel. You aren't fooling Him by trying to keep a secret from Him.

Listening: Find out someone else's story. People become resilient through perseverance. When someone is going through a terrible time of suffering, it may seem like it's never going to end and hopelessness takes over. Even Job asked God to crush him and cut off his life so that his pain and misery would end. But Job persevered, and so have many, many people. Go to someone in your family, someone in your church, or someone else you know who has come through suffering. Ask to hear that person's story.

Sit with the Suffering: It's good to pray for those who are suffering, and you should pray for them. But, sometimes they need someone just to be there with them, to comfort them and let them talk and hold their hand. You don't have to have answers, especially to the question, "Why is this happening?" You can say, "I don't know, but I'm here for you."

Research and Support: In various parts of the world, Christians are suffering for their faith. Research their struggles. Pray for them. Connect with an organization that helps them.

A PEEK AT THE GREEK

The word James uses for patience is *makrothumia*, which literally means something like "long-tempered." You know what it's like to be short-tempered, when any little thing can set you off. Patience is the opposite.

The word for "grumble" in verse 9 (*stenazo*) is used elsewhere for a similar situation. Paul talks about all creation "groaning" with us in anticipation of God's final redemption and about our own "groaning" as we look forward to our heavenly home (Romans 8:22–3; 2 Corinthians 5:2,4). It's the same word that's translated "grumbling" in James. It's a deep longing for a better future, but when we turn it "against one another," it can become toxic.