

Praying Through Suffering

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[0 : 00] Well if we could, with the Lord's help, and the Lord's enabling this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read. James chapter 5.

James chapter 5, we're going to look at verses 12 to the end, but if we just read again at verse 13. James chapter 5 at verse 13. Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? 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. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven, and so on. And so we've now come to the end of our study in the letter of James, and as I said it's taken us a lot longer than it should have, since we started looking at this letter last September. But as with many things in life, there were unforeseen circumstances that we couldn't prevent. Nevertheless, this letter, it's been a challenging letter to read, and it's been a challenging letter to study. And that's because James directly addresses our conduct as Christians. James doesn't focus upon information and head knowledge of doctrine and theology.

Rather, James focuses upon application and the importance of living out our faith in a fallen world, and in a world that is hostile to the gospel. And as we've said since we began our study on the letter of James, we're to consider it as a handbook to Christian living, because James's concern is that we apply the gospel in our lives and live out our faith in a practical way. And this handbook to Christian living, although it's short, it was written for those who love Jesus and desire to live in submission to his word. It was written for us so that we would not only be hearers of God's word, but that we would be doers also. But as we know, the original audience of this letter, they were Christians who were young in their faith, and they were experiencing persecution for their faith. And as young believers, like us all, they needed to be discipled. But their lack of discipleship, it had caused a lot of problems in the church. They were surrounded by temptations as Christians, and it caused discrimination and gossip and backbiting and jealousy and divisions. But the root cause of all their problems was immaturity. They needed to grow. They needed to mature in their faith. And so James writes to these persecuted Christians to encourage them that living out your faith in a fallen world, it's not an easy task. And so James says to them, you need to grow as Christians. You need to persevere with your Christian witness. You need to be steadfast in your faith. You need to be devoted in your love for Jesus and your love for his cause. James says in these closing verses, you need patience and you need prayer. And as we said last week, that's how he brings it all to a conclusion. He speaks about this topic of patience and prayer. James emphasizes the need for steadfastness and faithfulness. He concludes by encouraging and teaching these Christians and us to remain steadfast in their faith and to persevere to the end. But as we said last week, what James highlights in this concluding section are two characteristics? These two characteristics is what every Christian must possess in order to remain steadfast and persevere. And the two characteristics are patience, as he says there. If you're using the ESV, the titles are there, patience and prayer. And these words, as we read, they're repeated throughout the closing section, those words, patience and prayer. So in this conclusion,

[4 : 29] James is encouraging us and he's teaching us about patience and suffering and prayer through suffering. Patience in suffering and prayer through suffering. And last week we considered patience in suffering.

And James encouraged us and he taught us that we're to be patient in suffering as we await the parousia, the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We're to be patient in suffering as we follow the example of the prophets who continue to be faithful to the Lord despite much opposition. And lastly, we saw that we were to be patient in suffering by clinging to all the promises of God's word. But now as James concludes what concludes this letter, he not only says that we need to be patient

in suffering, he also says that we need to have prayer or we need prayer through suffering. And so let's consider these closing verses of James's letter. And I'd just like us to look at them under three headings. Conduct, concern and commitment. Conduct, concern and commitment. So we look first of all at conduct in verse 12.

He says in verse 12, but above all my brothers, do not swear either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. As we read through this passage, at first glance it seems that this verse just stands alone and it doesn't really fit into the flow of James's conclusion because why should taking vows have anything to do with suffering and persecution? Why does making oaths have, what does it have to do with remaining steadfast in the faith and persevering to the end? What does making oaths have to do with being patient in suffering and praying through suffering? Well the truth is, it seems that taking vows and making oaths has everything to do with persevering and being patient and praying in the midst of suffering. Because what James is highlighting and stressing to us in the close of this letter is our need to be faithful in our conduct as Christians. He's saying that we need to live out the faith we profess and we need to live our lives in a manner that reflects the name of Jesus Christ. But of course when James says do not swear, he's not referring to coarse language or vulgar speech. James is talking about invoking God's name as a guarantee to the reliability of what we're saying.

[7 : 22] And he's saying don't do it. Don't make an oath in the name of God in order to prove your integrity and to assert your trustworthiness. Because he says our truthfulness should be so consistent and so dependable that we shouldn't need an oath to support it. A simple yes or no, he says, should be sufficient.

And what James is saying is that our word should be completely trustworthy, like a signed document which is legally correct and complete. Now I don't believe that what James is saying here is that he's prohibiting all oaths altogether. He's not talking about marriage or official oaths like the court cases which were asked to take oaths for legal reasons and affirm that will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I don't believe James is referring to official oaths but voluntary oaths.

And a voluntary oath was an oath that was made voluntarily in order to ensure the truthfulness and the integrity of what someone has affirmed or promised. But what we have to say is that this teaching of James, it's again the teaching of Jesus. It's all, he's just reaffirming the teaching of Jesus. And we've seen that time and time again throughout the letter of James. James has drawn much of his teaching from Jesus and in particular from the Sermon on the Mount. And that's where this teaching comes from.

That's where this verse comes from. Because in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, Jesus says pretty much the same thing that James writes here. Because Jesus says in Matthew 5, he says, You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn. But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven for it is the throne of God, or by earth for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great king. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply yes or no. Anything more than this comes from evil.

And so the reason why Jesus and James raised this issue is because there were people who were ready to make oaths and promises without actually considering the consequences. And what James and Jesus want to teach us is that as disciples of Jesus, we should be already known as those who can be relied upon. Where a distinct feature of our lives, he's saying, a distinct feature of our Christian life is that we are to be reliable. We are to be people of integrity. We are to be trustworthy. We're to be upright. We're to be honest and dependable people. Because what often happened in the first century was that people would make a rash oath in order to prove their integrity or their trustworthiness. But once an oath was made, especially when it was made in the name of the Lord, there was no turning back. But what Jesus and James are saying is that our integrity and our conduct, it's to be dependable and reliable and trustworthy. And our conduct should be enough for people.

[10 : 59] Because as Christians, we must, what he's saying is we must always speak the truth. Our conversation ought to be always so honest that no one is ever in doubt or ever questions what we say.

And our character, he says, ought to be so true that we don't need to rely upon oaths and vows and promises in order for people to believe us. We should need to base anything upon, anything we say upon an oath.

What he's saying is that we shouldn't have to say, I promise, or you can trust me. I'm reliable. I swear. In God's name, I swear. I put my right hand up to God. All these things. James is saying that our integrity, the integrity of our conduct, both publicly and privately, should be ample evidence to prove to prove that our word is trustworthy and true. And so what James is saying is that as Christians, no one should ever question whether we're telling the truth or not. No one should doubt the truthfulness of what comes out of our mouth by the way in which we live our lives.

What he's saying is that there shouldn't be a contradiction by our conduct. There shouldn't be a contradiction of what comes out of our mouth by our conduct, the way we live our life.

And this is why James begins the verse, in verse 12, with the words, Above all my brothers. Above all my brothers. James is stressing to us that above all that he's taught us, above all that he's encouraged us with, and above all that he's challenged us about, above all our conduct, he says, as Christians, is not to be a contradiction.

[12:55] We are not to contradict the teaching of Scripture by what we say and what we do. And James, as we know, he has taught us many things. He's taught us to be hearers and doers of God's word.

He's taught us about the sin of partiality, of looking down on other people. He's taught us that faith without works is dead. He's taught us how to use our tongue or not to misuse our tongue.

He's taught us about wordliness and gossip and backbiting and pride and jealousy and boasting and division. James has taught us all these things. But now he comes to the end and he says, above all.

Above all, my brothers and sisters in Christ, even in the midst of all your suffering and persecution, you must remain steadfast in your faith and persevere to the end by being trustworthy.

Above all, you must live a life that is worthy of the calling to which you have been called. Because you have been called from darkness into his marvellous light.

[14:00] You've been called to come out of the world and be separate from them. You've been called to be holy in your conversation and in all your conduct. You've been called to deny self, to take up your cross and to follow Jesus.

And James says, because you have been called to this life, anything else is hypocrisy. Anything else is hypocrisy.

Our Bible versions say in verse 12, But above all, my brothers, do not swear either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath. Let your yes be yes and your no be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

But when you look at the original Greek, it's interesting to see that it's literally, the verse literally ends, so that you may not fall upon judgment.

And the words, just if I can use them, the hypocrisy, which is where we get the word hypocrisy.

[15:11] Hypocrisy. Hypocrisy. And to call anyone a hypocrite, it's a strong indictment towards their character and their conduct.

As you know, a hypocrite is an actor. A hypocrite is a pretender, a fraud, a phony, a counterfeit. In fact, the word hypocrite, it comes from, it was often used in the Greek plays, in which these plays were held in large auditoriums.

And the actor would wear a mask over his face in order to conceal his true identity and assume his role on the stage. And with a mask over the actor's face, he would present to the audience an appearance of someone else other than his true self.

And James says, Christians can't be like that. We are not to be hypocrites or actors or phonies or frauds because our conduct and our character is to be trustworthy and true.

And so we see in these closing verses of the letter of James that our conduct and character before God must be trustworthy and true. But secondly, we see that James speaks about our need for concern.

[16:30] The need for concern. You look at verse 13. He says, James' conclusion.

James' concluding concern for the church is, it's very similar to the concluding concerns that are found at the close of Paul's letter. Paul says to the Philippians in chapter 4, Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests

known to God.

He says to the Ephesians, Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

And Paul says to the Thessalonians in chapter 5, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, he says at the end of his letter, Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

And so what we see here is that James explains, you could say, what Paul meant by praying about everything and in every circumstance. They always close their letters by telling us to pray.

[18 : 03] But James, he gives this detailed list of all the trials that these Christians were encountering. And from our study of this letter, we know that they were facing persecution and opposition for their faith.

They were facing temptations from the world. They were experiencing suffering both spiritually and physically. But as James gives details to the suffering that they were facing, he also teaches and encourages the believers how to respond to that suffering.

Because he asks in verse 13, is there anyone among you suffering? And he says, let him pray. But this is, they're actually imperatives, meaning that when James asks, is there anyone among you suffering?

He commands us, he says, pray, pray. But James doesn't tell them to pray for God to take away their suffering. James doesn't teach and encourage these believers to petition God and plead with God that their trial would be removed from them.

Rather, James is teaching and encouraging these believers and us not to pray for the trial of our faith to be taken away from us, but to ask the Lord for strength to endure the trial.

[19 : 20] Because by praying about our trial, whatever it may be, by praying about it, we're already seeking to look at it, not from our perspective, but from God's perspective.

And this is what James is encouraging us with. He's encouraging us to deal with our trials and endure suffering with the right spirit and with a divine perspective.

And you know, we see an example of that in the Apostle Paul. You remember in 2 Corinthians 12, Paul tells us that the Lord gave to him a thorn in the flesh.

And he describes this thorn in the flesh as a messenger from Satan to harass me, he says. To harass me and to keep me from becoming conceited.

And Paul says, three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. Three times I asked the Lord, just like Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane, let this cup pass from me.

[20 : 24] Take it away from me. But Paul says that the Lord brought me to confess just like Jesus did. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. And Paul says, the Lord said to me, my grace is sufficient for you.

For my strength is made perfect in weakness. And because of that, Paul says, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

For the sake of Christ, he says, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

And James says to us, is there anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Let him pray. Let him come to the God whose grace is sufficient.

Let him come to the God who gives more grace. Let him come to the God who provides for us a throne of grace at which we're not only able to obtain mercy, but also to find there grace to help in time of need.

[21 : 37] Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. But then James asks, is anyone among you cheerful? Let him sing praise.

And with this, James is indicating that not all of life is sorrow and suffering. There are also times of joy and jubilation. But we know, as we know from this letter and the context of it, the context is sorrow and suffering.

And so we have to see that James is teaching and encouraging us to sing praise to the Lord in the midst of sorrow and suffering. Because he knows that mature Christians who look at their circumstances from a divine perspective, they will be able to sing while suffering.

They will be able to rejoice and be glad in the midst of their suffering. Which means that it's not singing instead of suffering. but singing in the midst of suffering.

It's praise in the midst of persecution. It's praise in the midst of problems. Not instead of them, but in the midst of them. And you know, it was Job who said, in the midst of all that he suffered and all that he went through, having lost his family, Job lost his business, he lost his health, and yet he said to the Lord that the Lord is able to give songs in the night.

[23 : 03] The Lord is able to give songs in the darkness. The Lord is able to give songs in the midst of suffering. And you know, when you think about it, when we come to Calvary and we stand at the foot of the cross and we look upon the prince, upon the cross upon which the prince of glory died, and when you look and think about the horrors of the crucifixion and the hatred of mankind towards God's beloved son, but you know, as we stand there and as we witness not only the spiritual darkness, but also the physical darkness of Calvary, when the midday sun has been extinguished and the cross is shrouded in darkness, all these people that they've gathered round to see this great spectacle of the cross, and all these people have now been silenced.

And yet in the midst of all the suffering, when we listen into the silence, you know, all you hear are the words of a song.

My God, my God, why? Have you forsaken me? And you know, in those words, Psalm 22, as we were singing, it comes to life.

But in these words, they were not only words of a prayer, they were also words of praise. Because at Calvary, in the midst of all the suffering, the suffering silence, there was singing.

And there was singing while suffering. There was praise in persecution. Because, as the writer to the Hebrews reminds us, it was for the joy that was set before him that he endured the cross, despising its shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[25 : 00] My friends, suffering and singing, prayer and praise, you know, they go hand in hand. that was the testimony of Jesus at Calvary. That was the testimony of the early church when they experienced persecution.

When Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi, they prayed and they sang praise to God. Prayer and praise go hand in hand.

And they have to be important elements in the life of the church. And they have to be important elements in the life of the believer. Prayer and praise. They have to go together because they are an expression of our heart.

And that's what James has been saying all along. That has been his concern all along. That we guard our heart from the world. We protect our heart from temptation.

And we nourish our heart with the things of God. Prayer and praise. And so he's asking us, is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.

[26 : 04] Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? 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.

And this third question of concern from James, it's often caused a lot of confusion because, well, are we to take it literally or are we to think that it was only for a particular time in the early church? What does James mean when he asks this question? Well, the first thing we have to see is that when James asks, is anyone among you sick? The sickness or the word for sickness used here? It's referring not to a particular sickness, but sickness in general. The sickness, it covers a host of different ailments and illnesses, whether it was physical, spiritual, or mental.

As what James says, when there is someone who is sick, they are to call the elders of the church because the elders have been set apart in their office in the congregation to the role of preaching the word of God or presenting the word of God or ministering the word of God and prayer.

[27 : 19] So their role as elders is ministering God's word and prayer and that's what we see in the book of Acts. You remember when the first deacons were, you could say, instituted or put into office to work in the church.

the deacons were given the responsibility to help the poor and deal with the functions of the church while the elders, they devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of God's word.

And you know, let's never forget that both the elders and the deacons, they were given a solemn responsibility and it wasn't a hierarchy. I can't look at it as a hierarchy.

The elders aren't above the deacons and the deacons aren't below the elders and neither of them are above the congregation because the roles of elder and deacon and minister, they're all roles of service.

They serve the congregation. They serve the congregation and they serve Jesus Christ. And for the elders, their service to Christ and their service to their congregation is by prayer and the ministry of God's word.

[28 : 29] And so when James says, when there is someone who is sick, they're to call the elders. Now, note that James not only emphasises the responsibility of the elders to go to the sick but also upon the person who is sick or the family of the person who is sick.

They are to call for the elders. They are to inform the church officers. We can't expect the elders to come if they're not informed. And as I've said it before and I'll say it again, please tell me.

Please inform the elders. Please allow the elders to inform me. Because people can't expect the elders or the minister to come if they're not informed. But when they are informed, James says that the elders of the church are to come and they're to carry out all their pastoral duties by praying and ministering God's word.

The elders are to pray with them and to pray for them and even to ask the congregation to pray for them. But James also says that the elders are to anoint the person who is sick with oil in the name of the Lord.

Now what does that mean? Does it mean that the minister and the elder should carry oil with them when they go visiting? And does it mean that pastoring the congregation or all the ministers you've had and all the elders you've had down throughout the generations, have they been doing it wrong all this time?

[29 : 54] Or was the oil only ever used in special occasions? Well, I don't think that the oil was only used for special occasions because, as we said, the word for sickness is general sickness.

So this oil would be used in every circumstance. But I don't think that this oil had any spiritual or religious significance or the spiritual ability to provide healing.

I don't think that we should consider this oil as like sacramental oil where we think it had spiritual power. The oil, the spiritual power was not in the oil.

The spiritual power was in prayer. The oil was medicine. The oil was medicine because in the ancient world oil was used for medicinal purposes.

And it would be used from toothache to open wounds. It would be used for a variety of different things. And you see that in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

[30 : 58] We all know the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan, he finds the man who's been beaten and robbed. And we're told that he went to him, bandaged his wounds and poured oil and wine on him.

And so James is saying that the church is to come to a person who's sick with medicinal oil and prayer. But why should the church have medicine? Would that not be the job of a doctor?

Well, as you know, in the first century there was very little in the way of health centres and GPs and doctors. There were many witch doctors who could provide many lotions and potions.

But because the church in the first century and in every century, because they have to provide both spiritual and practical help, they provided medicinal oil for those who were sick.

And they also provided medicinal oil because it was expensive and so few had the resources to buy it for themselves. And so James emphasises that, this is what he has emphasised throughout his letter, he emphasises that the role of the church in its community is to be one that is not only spiritual but practical.

[32 : 14] Both go hand in hand. It's to be involved in the affairs of its community both on a spiritual and a practical level. Meaning that both prayer and medicine were to be administered in the name of the Lord and with the Lord's authority to be used in healing the sick.

Now, we're in the 21st century and in the 21st century as you know medical advancements have been made and they're far superior to the medicinal oil of the first century.

But what hasn't changed is the need for prayer and the power in prayer. That hasn't changed from the first century to the 21st century.

And the need to call the elders to pray with and for those who are sick, that hasn't changed either. And this is what James goes on to speak about next.

He speaks about the need for prayer and the power of prayer. And so we see in these closing verses of the letter of James that our conduct before others and our concern before others it must be trustworthy and true.

[33 : 27] But thirdly and finally we see commitment. Conduct, concern, commitment. Commitment. Look at verse 15. He says, And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up.

And if he has committed sins he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

So James concludes his handbook to Christian living by speaking about the need to remain steadfast and persevere by praying through suffering.

And with this James says that it's prayer which heals the sick and not the anointing oil. Because he says the prayer of faith will heal the one that is sick.

but we have to be clear. James isn't taking the line of many faith healers that we'll see on the God Channel and all these different programs who say that if you pray with enough faith you will be healed.

[34 : 35] But if you're not healed it's because you didn't have enough faith. That sort of theological, if I can say it, nonsense, which it is, it's what causes chaos in people's lives.

And it leaves them in more turmoil than the illness they have itself. Because well thankfully our prayers are not answered according to the level of our faith.

Our prayers are only answered according to God's will. And that's why Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

My friend our prayers are not answered according to our level of faith. Or our strength of faith.

Because Jesus says that all we need is faith the size of a grain of mustard seed.

Therefore we must pray according to God's will. Knowing that our prayers will only be answered according to God's will. And this is what the Apostle John he stressed to the churches when he said he said and this is the confidence that we have towards him.

[35 : 44] That if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And so we must be committed to praying as it says for one another and committed in our different situations and praying according to God's will.

But James says that we're not only to pray for one another, he also says that we're to confess our sins to one another. God. Which seems like a completely alien concept especially within our context because in the day and age and day and generation that we live in everyone is so private and everyone is so personal and so individualistic and we only want people to see the good in us and not the bad.

We want to portray to everyone in the world that life is rosy and everything is fine. But what James is stressing with our need to confess our sins to one another, he's stressing the need for accountability.

Because we need to be accountable to one another as Christians. We need to be aware of our responsibility to be holy and to live a life that is as Christ-like as possible.

And the only way to do that is to be accountable to one another or to a particular Christian. I know that in one sense, well, everyone who's a member in a congregation is accountable to the session, if you want to put it like that.

[37 : 14] But, you know, we need to be accountable and we should be accountable and we should seek to be accountable to another Christian, whether it's our husband or our wife or a Christian friend or an older Christian, in which we can be open with them and we can confess struggles and sins to them and talk about these struggles or worries or anxieties and even pray about them.

We need to be accountable because that's what discipleship is. And this is why James says in the last two verses of his letter, he says, he's talking about accountability and he says, my brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sin.

He's speaking about the need for accountability and discipleship and he's saying that a lack of accountability and discipleship, it will harm the cause of Christ more than anything else.

Because a backsliding Christian, he's saying, can do a lot of damage to the cause of Christ. And so James says that we need to be concerned.

We need to be concerned about our own conduct. We need to be concerned for one another. And we need to be committed, committed to one another, committed to the Lord's cause, committed in

our accountability and our discipleship of one another.

[38 : 54] God. And he says we need to be just like Elijah was. Just like Elijah. And who better to conclude a letter with one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament.

Elijah was a man who was concerned about his conduct as a prophet. He was faithful to the Lord despite the entire nation of Israel turning away from the Lord and turning to worship idols.

Elijah was a man who was concerned for his people. And he wanted them to turn away from the idols of Baal and turn back to worshipping the covenant God of Israel.

And you know Elijah, he was committed to discipling and holding to account the disobedient Israelites. And you'll remember in the history of the kings, and with this I'll close, we're running out of time.

You'll remember that King Ahab, he was on the throne then. And he had led the Israelites away from worshipping the Lord to worshipping Baal. And Baal was the god of fertility.

[40 : 01] Baal was meant to provide a good harvest if you worshipped him. But the truth was he only provided drought and famine in the land of Israel. Because when the Lord saw the disobedience of the Israelites, he answered Elijah's prayer in accordance with his will.

And he stopped the rain for three and a half years. Three and a half years in Israel with no rain. But it was in those three and a half years that the Lord's prophet Elijah, he proclaimed the message of the true and living God.

And he disciplined the Israelites with the truth. To the point that when you come to 1 Kings 18, you see Elijah standing alone as the alone prophet of the Lord.

And he's before 450 prophets of Baal. And he's praying that the Lord would show his power and his glory in fire coming down from heaven and consuming the sacrifice on the altar.

And the spectacle is all before the Israelites. And as you know in 1 Kings 18, that's what happened. The Lord did. He displayed his power by consuming the sacrifice.

[41 : 14] Burning it up. And in that moment when the Israelites saw the Lord, they turned away from worshipping Baal. And they turned back to the Lord and confessed.

The Lord, he is God. The Lord, he is God. And the reason James mentions Elijah is because Elijah was concerned about their conduct.

And he was concerned about his own conduct. He was concerned for the people. And he was committed to the Lord and his people. He was concerned about his people.

And committed to the Lord and his people. And then James says, Elijah was a man just like us. Just like us. Meaning that as we come to the close of our handbook to Christian living, he's saying that we too must be concerned about our conduct.

[42 : 22] We too must be concerned for other Christians in our accountability and our discipleship. And we too must be committed to the Lord and his cause.

So that's the letter of James. A handbook to Christian living. It's a very challenging handbook. And one worth reading over and over again.

So may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for the preciousness of thy word.

We thank thee that it is the only rule to direct us. On how we may glorify and enjoy thee forever.

And help us, Lord, we pray as thy people. To live lives that bring glory to thy name.

And live lives that bring light to those who are in darkness. Help us, Lord, we pray thee to serve thee aright. To serve thee and live humbly before thee.

[43 : 28] To live lives, Lord, that are like the light of the world and the salt of the earth. O Father, keep us, we pray, and teach us. Teach us, Lord, as the psalmist prayed.

Teach me thy way. And in thy truth, O Lord, then walk will I. Unite my heart. That I, thy name, may fear continually. That we, O Lord, would know the teaching of the Lord.

And that we would be good students. That learn and that apply the truth in our lives. Go before us, we ask thee. Do us good. Cleanse us from every sin.

Because we know that when we confess our sin. The Lord, one who is faithful and just to forgive us. And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Do us good, and we pray. For Jesus' sake.

Amen. We shall conclude by singing the words of Psalm 119. Psalm 119.

[44 : 26] It's page 402. We're singing from verse 33 down to the verse marked 37. Psalm 119 from verse 33.

Teach me, O Lord, the perfect way of thy precepts divine. And to observe it to the end, I shall my heart incline. Give understanding unto me, so keep thy law shall I.

Yea, e'en with my whole heart I shall observe it carefully. Down to the verse marked 37. To God's praise. Teach me, O Lord, the perfect way of thy precepts divine.

And to observe it to the end, I shall my heart incline.

Give understanding unto me, so keep thy law shall I.

[45 : 51] Yea, e'en with my whole heart I shall observe it carefully.

In thy lost path make me to go, for I delight there.

My heart unto thy testimonies, and not to be denied.

Hear, O Lord, the perfect way of thy sight and eyes. Hear, O Lord, the perfect way of thy sight and eyes. From you in vanity.

Be pleased to quake in me.

[47 : 02] Amen. Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.