



Chapter 5

• LIVING FAITHFULLY THROUGH PERSEVERANCE •

READ: JAMES 5:1-6 - | LUKE 12:13-21
TREASURES THAT LAST

When we had our first baby, I was thrilled about getting things ready, especially the adorable clothes he would wear. Those tiny undershirts, snug sleepers, and oh-so-cute outfits—not to mention the precious little socks. With five older sisters, grandmas, and friends, Brendan was blessed with an abundance of clothes. Even after 32 years, I still remember his Winnie the Pooh sleeper, complete with a hoodie and little bear ears.

I never realized how quickly a newborn could grow until I found myself carefully packing his clothes into boxes as he outgrew them week by week. Before I knew it, we had a growing mountain of boxes downstairs, filled with enough sleepers and bibs to clothe a whole group of quintuplets—possibly two!

One day, my sister Kathy got the exciting news that she was going to be a grandma. I finally had someone to give the clothes to and a way to free up space in our basement. I was more than happy to haul the boxes upstairs where I could show off the collection I had lovingly saved. As I opened the boxes, however, my heart suddenly sank. The cardboard smelled musty, and the beautiful clothes I had stored were covered in mold. It was disappointing to say the least.

While that experience taught me to store linen in plastic bins, it also served to remind me that the things of this world are short-lived. They rot, they rust, they're eaten by moths... and because they're failing, they will always fail us.

As I got to thinking about that today, I was reminded of the Parable of the Rich Fool. In Luke 12:13-21, Jesus tells the story of a wealthy man who, after a bountiful harvest, decides to tear down his barns and build bigger ones to store all his grain and goods. He plans to relax and enjoy life, thinking he has secured his future. But God calls him a fool, saying, "This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" The rich man failed to recognize that his wealth could not secure his soul or his eternal future.



This isn't to say that saving for the future, and planning for retirement, is wrong. The Bible encourages us to be wise stewards of the resources God gives us. What James is addressing in this section is the danger of placing our trust in wealth, believing it can provide ultimate security or fulfillment. Not because wealth itself is bad, but because one's reliance on it is a dangerous path. Instead, our focus should be on cultivating a heart that values integrity, generosity, and a deep relationship with God.

Benson Commentary offers a vivid depiction of the political climate during the time of James's writing. He describes how the unbelieving Jews, driven by a love of sensual pleasure and greed, often oppressed the poor. To warn these individuals and urge them toward repentance, James vividly

portrays the imminent suffering that the Roman Empire, as an instrument of divine judgment, was set to inflict upon the Jewish people. Benson states,

The unbelieving Jews, being exceedingly addicted to sensual pleasure, and very covetous, were of course grievous oppressors of the poor. Wherefore, to alarm these wicked men, and, if possible, to bring them to repentance, James, in the first paragraph of this chapter, sets before them, in the most lively colours, the miseries which the Romans, the instruments of the divine vengeance, were about to bring on the Jewish people, both in Judea and everywhere else, now deserted of God for their crimes, and particularly for the great crime of murdering the Just One, Jesus of Nazareth, their long-expected Messiah. He highlights the futility and moral failure of accumulating wealth through injustice, knowing that it would soon be lost due to the impending Roman conquest.

It's just as easy today to fall into this trap, especially in a culture that measures success by material wealth and possessions. The allure of luxury, comfort, clicks, and status can lead us to place too much value on things that have no lasting significance. Everything is but a breath, a fleeting whisper in the wind; even the strongest structures and the finest treasures have their time, and then they're gone, just like everything else around us.

This transient nature of life calls us to look beyond what is temporary, urging us to seek what is eternal and unchanging. It invites us to cultivate a heart that values integrity, generosity, and a deep relationship with God. When we prioritize these eternal treasures, we discover a richer, more meaningful life—one that isn't swayed by the ups and downs of our financial circumstances. This perspective keeps our focus on what truly matters, even amidst the shifting sands of a transient world.

Final Thought

In this chapter, we see a powerful warning directed at those who place their trust in material wealth. James vividly describes the temporary nature of riches, using images of rotting wealth, corroded gold and silver, and moth-eaten clothes to remind us that earthly possessions are fleeting and cannot provide true security.

James 5:4-6 condemns those who have gained wealth through unjust means, particularly by oppressing the poor. In today's society, what are some ways people might accumulate wealth at the expense of others?

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What are some ways that the culture around us encourages the pursuit of wealth and material goods? How can you resist the temptation to measure your success by worldly standards?

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KEY CONCEPTS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

JAMES 5:1-6

TESTIFY:

In the context of James 5:3, "testify" means to provide evidence or serve as a witness against someone. The passage describes how the corroded gold and silver will "testify" against the rich, symbolizing how their decayed wealth will stand as evidence of their greed, corruption, and failure to use their resources justly. The wealth they hoarded, now worthless and corrupted, will serve as a witness to their moral and spiritual decay, ultimately condemning them.



SLAUGHTER:

"Slaughter" is often associated with judgment or punishment. The imagery of "fattening yourselves in the day of slaughter" suggests that the rich, in their pursuit of luxury and self-indulgence, are unknowingly preparing themselves for a day of reckoning or judgment, much like animals being fattened before they are slaughtered. It implies that their unchecked greed and indulgence will lead to their ultimate downfall and destruction.

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READ: JAMES 5:7-12 | JOB 1-2 & 42 PATIENT IN TRIALS

Last summer was a rough one for me. We were finally over the pandemic, but so much had changed in its wake. Our business closed its doors, our boys lost their jobs, and they moved out together, taking the dog with them. Michael got sick, and we had to sell our house. With only two weeks to find a new place, we ended up an hour away from the kids. Through it all, I did my best to be thankful and positive. I thanked God for the new paths He was laying before us, particularly for the trials that seemed to gnaw at my peace.

One day, it all hit me. Sitting in my broken-down car on the side of a highway in the middle of nowhere, I poured out my pain to the Lord. I'm not ashamed to admit that I cried that day, because I've come to understand that sharing our struggles with God is a vital part of deepening our relationship with Him. When we walk in faith, trials will come—heavy burdens that threaten to crush our spirit, clouds that block out the sun, and tests that seem relentless. But here's the truth we need to hold on to: adversity will either leave us feeling defeated, or it will strengthen us.

David understood this. In Psalm 13, we witness him pouring his heart out to God in the midst of his own distress. Yet, at the end of his prayer, we also see his unwavering trust in the Lord:

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me. (Psalm 13:5-6, NIV)

That same trust in God's unfailing love is echoed in James 5:7-12. Here, James encourages us to be patient in our suffering, pointing us to the examples of the prophets and the endurance of Job. He begins with a call to patience, likening it to a farmer waiting for his plants to grow. The harvest, he reminds us, cannot be hurried; it comes in its own time:



Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. (James 5:7, NIV)

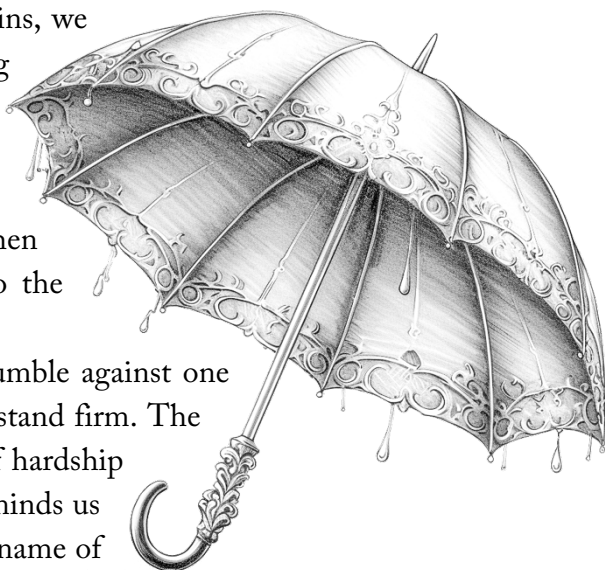
Just as the farmer waits for the rains, we too must wait on the Lord, trusting in His perfect timing. The trials we face are not without purpose; they are opportunities for us to cultivate patience and to strengthen our hearts as we look forward to the Lord's return.

James also urges us not to grumble against one another during these trials but to stand firm. The patience we practice in the face of hardship is a testament to our faith. He reminds us of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord, enduring suffering with patience:

As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. (James 5:11, NIV)

Job's story is a powerful example of the perseverance James is talking about. Despite losing everything—his wealth, his health, and even his children—Job remained faithful to God. He questioned, he grieved, but he never abandoned his trust in God. And in the end, God restored Job, blessing him even more than before.

As we face our own struggles, whether it's being stranded on the side of a road or something far more challenging, let's keep James's words close to our hearts. Our trials are not the end of the story. They are part of God's process of cultivating a faith within us that is strong, enduring, and steadfast.



Final Thought

Hold on to these powerful words: “The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.” Whatever you’re going through today, know that God sees your struggle, and He is working in and through it for your good and His glory.

- ❓ James suggests that trials have a purpose in cultivating patience and strengthening our hearts. How do you think trials accomplish this in our lives?

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? James 5:7-12 encourages a long-term perspective, focusing on the Lord's coming. How does maintaining an eternal perspective help us endure temporary hardships?

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KEY CONCEPTS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

JAMES 5:7-12

PATIENT:

In this context, "patient" refers to the ability to endure difficult circumstances or delays without losing faith or becoming agitated. It is the quality of waiting with calmness and trust, especially for the Lord's coming or during times of suffering.

PERSEVERE:

"Persevere" means to continue steadfastly in a course of action despite facing difficulties or opposition. It highlights the endurance and persistence of

those, like Job and the prophets, who remained faithful to God even in the face of significant challenges and suffering.

SWEAR:

In this context, "swear" refers to making a solemn or serious promise or oath, often invoking God or something sacred as a witness to the truth of one's words. The passage advises against swearing by heaven, earth, or anything else's, instead one's word should be simple and truthful—"Yes" or "No"—without the need for elaborate oaths. This emphasis reflects the importance of honesty and integrity in speech.

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JAMES 5:13-20 | 1 Kings 17:1-7 & 18:41-46
THE POWER OF FERVENT PRAYER

I remember those days when my kids were younger. I'd ask them to check if the water was boiling on the stove, and more often than not, they'd respond with something like, "I'm not sure. I see some bubbles coming up." And my answer to them was always the same: "When it's boiling, you'll know it's boiling. There's no mistaking it."

And you know what? That's how our prayer life should be—so intense and passionate that there's no mistaking we've been in the presence of God.

James 5:16-18 says, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly

that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.”

Elijah’s story is incredible, not because he was some superhuman, but because he was just like us—flesh and blood, with fears and doubts. But his prayers? They were unmistakable because they were fueled by his deep connection with God and his unshakable faith.

Think about it. Elijah’s first prayer, asking for a drought, was no small thing. For three and a half years, not a drop of rain fell. That drought wasn’t just inconvenient; it brought the whole nation to its knees. But here’s the thing: Elijah didn’t pray that prayer lightly. He prayed it because he knew it was in line with God’s will. His prayer was about more than just stopping the rain—it was about turning the hearts of the people back to God.

And when the time was right, Elijah prayed again—this time for rain. But he didn’t just throw up one quick prayer and walk away—he prayed persistently, seven times, sending his servant each time to check the sky. And when that tiny cloud finally appeared, Elijah knew God was about to move.

That kind of persistence is something we need to grasp hold of. Sometimes, we pray and expect an immediate answer, but God calls us to keep praying, to keep believing. It’s not about twisting God’s arm—it’s about building our faith, aligning our hearts with His, and trusting in His perfect timing.

Elijah prayed with faith. He didn’t wait for the rain to start before he believed; he prayed with expectation, knowing that God would fulfill His promise. And that’s how we should pray too—with faith, believing that God hears us and will answer.



James 5:13-15 challenges us to pray in every circumstance—whether we’re in trouble, joyful, or in need of healing. Prayer isn’t just our last resort; it’s our first response. In both drought and rain, Elijah prayed earnestly. And in every season of our lives, whether it’s a season of hardship or blessing, we’re called to do the same.

But there’s another crucial piece to this. James 5:16 reminds us that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Now, none of us are perfect, but walking in right relationship with God—turning away from sin and seeking His will—makes our prayers even more effective. Psalm 66:18 tells us plainly, “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”

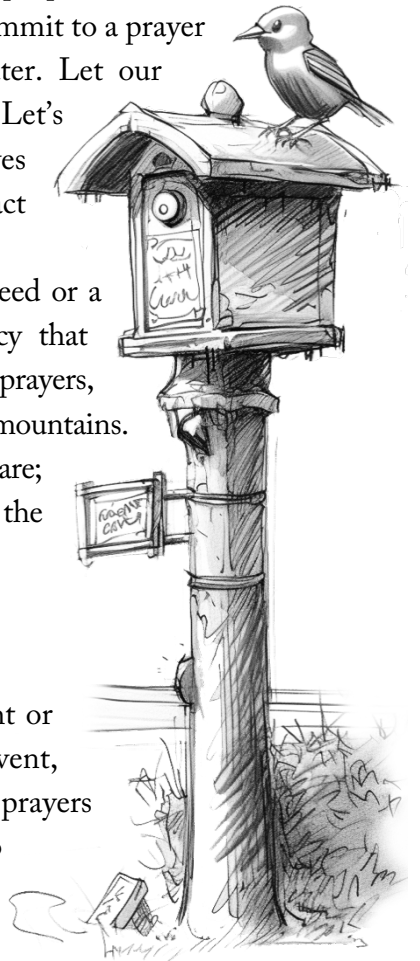
Elijah’s life shows us the power of a fervent, faith-filled, and righteous prayer. His prayers brought both drought and rain, showing us just how mighty prayer can be when it’s aligned with God’s purposes.

So, let’s take Elijah’s example to heart. Let’s commit to a prayer life that’s unmistakably fervent—like boiling water. Let our prayers be full of passion, faith, and righteousness. Let’s not hold back or be half-hearted. Let’s pour ourselves out before God, trusting that He hears us and will act according to His perfect will.

Whatever you’re facing—whether it’s a small need or a major breakthrough—pray with the same fervency that Elijah had. Trust that God is listening, and that your prayers, just like Elijah’s, have the power to move mountains. Remember, it’s not about how eloquent your words are; it’s about the earnestness of your heart and the righteousness of your walk with God.

Final Thought

In every situation, whether you’re facing a drought or eagerly awaiting the rain, let your prayers be fervent, persistent, and filled with faith. Just as Elijah’s prayers changed the weather, our prayers have the power to change our lives and the lives of those around us.



❓ Elijah prayed seven times before the rain came. What does this teach you about the importance of persistence in prayer? Can you share an example where persistence in prayer made a difference in your life?

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❓ Psalm 66:18 reminds us that sin can hinder our prayers. How do you ensure that your heart is aligned with God, and how does this alignment affect your confidence in prayer?

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KEY CONCEPTS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

JAMES 5:13-20

FAITH:

Faith refers to a strong belief and trust in God and His promises, even when circumstances are uncertain. In this context, a prayer offered in faith has the power to bring healing and restoration, as it demonstrates reliance on God's ability to act according to His will.

CONFESS:

To confess means to openly acknowledge or admit one's sins or wrongdoings. In this passage, believers are encouraged to confess their sins to one another, creating an atmosphere of accountability and support, leading to spiritual healing and forgiveness.

RIGHTEOUS:

Righteous refers to being morally right or justifiable, living in accordance with God's standards. In the passage, a "righteous person" is someone whose life aligns with God's will, and their prayers are described as powerful and effective because of their close relationship with God and their commitment to living a godly life.

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ANSWER KEY

Please note that the answers provided are intended to guide your understanding, but they may vary depending on personal perspectives. Many of these questions invite thoughtful reflection, and your responses might differ from the ones given here. My goal is to encourage you to consider the teachings and how they apply to your own life and faith journey.

CHAPTER 5

James 5:4-6 condemns those who have gained wealth through unjust means, particularly by oppressing the poor. In today's society, what are some ways people might accumulate wealth at the expense of others?

In today's society, people might accumulate wealth at the expense of others by underpaying workers, exploiting labor in developing countries, engaging in corrupt business practices, or manipulating markets to their advantage. These practices often prioritize profit over the well-being of individuals and communities.

What are some ways that the culture around us encourages the pursuit of wealth and material goods? How can you resist the temptation to measure your success by worldly standards?

The culture around us often glorifies wealth and material success through advertising, social media, and entertainment, which can create pressure to accumulate possessions and status symbols. To resist this temptation, focus on spiritual values, prioritize relationships and experiences over material

goods, and regularly remind yourself of the biblical truth that true success is measured by faithfulness to God rather than worldly achievements.

James suggests that trials have a purpose in cultivating patience and strengthening our hearts. How do you think trials accomplish this in our lives?

Trials help cultivate patience and strengthen our hearts by teaching us to rely on God, developing perseverance, and refining our character. As we navigate challenges, we learn to trust God's timing and grow in our ability to endure difficult circumstances, which deepens our faith and resilience.

James 5:7-12 encourages a long-term perspective, focusing on the Lord's coming. How does maintaining an eternal perspective help us endure temporary hardships?

Maintaining an eternal perspective helps us endure temporary hardships by reminding us that our current struggles are not the end of the story. It shifts our focus from immediate difficulties to the hope of Christ's return and the promise of eternal life, providing comfort and motivation to remain steadfast in our faith, knowing that our suffering is temporary and that God's ultimate plan for us is good.

Elijah prayed seven times before the rain came. What does this teach you about the importance of persistence in prayer? Can you share an example where persistence in prayer made a difference in your life?

Elijah's persistence in prayer teaches us the importance of continuing to seek God's intervention, even when we don't see immediate results. It encourages us to remain steadfast and patient, trusting that God hears our prayers and will answer in His perfect timing. Persistence in prayer reflects our faith and dependence on God.

Psalm 66:18 reminds us that sin can hinder our prayers. How do you ensure that your heart is aligned with God, and how does this alignment affect your confidence in prayer?

To ensure that our heart is aligned with God, we need to regularly confess our sins, seek forgiveness, and strive to live in obedience to His Word. This alignment with God helps to clear any barriers in our relationship with Him, allowing us to approach Him with confidence, knowing that our prayers are heard and that we are seeking His will rather than our own.