

Dr. David Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Lecture 27, James 4:13-5:20

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This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 27, James 4:13-5:20.

Okay, we want to go ahead and look now at the last portion of the book of James, and I just want to remind us of the structure of the whole, the plan of the entire book so as to recollect and get some sense as to how the individual passages that we have been working through relate to the grand scheme of things.

You remember that we suggested that in 1:2 through 1:27, we have the kind of an overture to the book where the writer sets forth several major issues in very brief compass and in a very general way within the declarations and instructions regarding the triumph of the Christian life over trials and temptations and over potential deception through the twin resources of wisdom and the word and that in the rest of the book, which would run from 2:1 through 5:18 or through 5:20, he develops these ideas, particularizes them in the course of arguments and exhortations regarding challenges in the Christian life according to a threefold movement. In chapter 2, arguments and exhortations regarding the treatment of the poor, which involves both partiality and failure to grant to the poor or to give to the poor in mercy what the poor need, with the theological discussion of faith and works there. The emphasis here is on submission to the poor, rejection of partiality, and passivity.

And then, in 3:1 through 4:12, as we've just seen, we have the arguments and exhortations regarding the struggle against warring passions, which focuses upon submission to the brotherhood. And of course, these warring passions actually relate to unruly speech and unruly desires. The rejection of impure speech and of bitter jealousy and all that springs from that.

And then we'll be moving on now to the last segment, the last cycle of these arguments and exhortations regarding challenges in the Christian life. Arguments and exhortations regarding patient submission to the sovereign will and action of God. Submission to the action of God here, a rejection of self-sufficiency and of self-rule.

Now, we do want to go ahead then and look at 4:13 through 5:18 or, as I mentioned when we looked at the survey of this, there's some question as to how 5:19 through 5:20 functions, whether it's a concluding counsel. And in some ways, I think it is. That is to say that it kind of relates equally to the whole of what we have before.

As a matter of fact, we even mentioned that you may have a comparison between what James is doing here in his work of instruction and reclamation and what he now

encourages or instructs his readers to do. As far as that's the case, 5:19 through 5:20 may stand in some sense equally over the whole of what we have in 1:2 through 5:18. But there's another sense, as we'll see, in which 5:19 through 5:20 may belong with 5:13 through 5:18. But if you allow me now to bring back the detailed analysis of 5:13 through 5:18 or through 5:20, which I've done here, the thing that links all this material together, I think, are arguments and exhortations regarding patient submission to the sovereign will and action of God. Submission, in other words, to the rule of God over life in its variety, in the variety of our experiences of life.

And it really involves primarily two things. I think the major break would come between 5:6 and 5:7. We have, first of all, and let me bring this up a little more fully here. We have, first of all, admonitions to the self-sufficient that we find in 4:13 through 5:6. This material is bound together by the recurrence of the phrase at the beginning of the paragraph, 4:13 through 5:17, and in the beginning of the next paragraph, 5:1 through 6, the recurrence of the phrase, come now, come now.

He says in 4:13, come now, you who say. And then again in 5:1, come now, you rich. That would be the recurrence of the phrase.

And so this really has to do with admonitions to the self-sufficient. As we'll see, the thing that binds these two paragraphs together, 4:13 through 5:17 and 5:1 through 6, is not only that they begin with this come now phrase, but also it involves admonitions to those who have means, to those who have wealth. To merchants in 4:13 through 5:17, and to landholders, 5:1 through 6. But then, in 5:7 through 20, we have admonitions to the suffering.

Those who are encouraged to submit to God out of their excess, out of their plenty, to those who are encouraged to submit to God in the midst of their distress. In the midst of their sufferings. In the case of 4:13 through 5:6, he is talking to those who are tempted to think that they have everything.

And the exhortation to submit to God pertains to that temptation to think that they have everything. Whereas, in the admonitions to the suffering, in 5:7 through 20, he is speaking to those who are tempted to think that they have nothing. Now, in 4:13 through 5:6, we do, of course, have two subunits here.

4:13 through 17 and 5:1 through 6. Let's look at these statements here, these passages just briefly. Come now you who say, today or tomorrow we will go into the midst of the suffering to such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain. Whereas you do not know about tomorrow.

That really involves a contrast. That is to say, the confidence of speech and plan over against the reality of the next day. A necessarily unknown future.

Then he, of course, substantiates verse 14. Whereas, you do not know about tomorrow, what is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, and here, of course, he contrasts what they are saying and the problem with it and the substantiation with it of the problem what they are saying.

He contrasts all of that with what they ought to say. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live, and we shall do this or that. Then, he draws a conclusion from it.

As it is, you boast in your arrogance. He says here in verse 16. You boast in your arrogance.

All such boasting is evil. That is substantiated then further by this general principle. Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him, it is sin.

Now, of course, they know or they ought to know that it is wrong to say today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain because it is manifest to them that they do not know about tomorrow. They do not have control over their future. So, to do this is manifestly wrong in the face of the knowledge that they do not have control over the future.

Another way of putting it is every human being knows or ought to know that he or she does not have control over his or her future and therefore, any boasting otherwise is deliberate wrongdoing. It involves knowing what is right to do and failing to do it and therefore, it is sinful. Now, you note here that he is referring to those who have means.

That is what he suggests. Let us go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain. He is referring here to wealthy, more or less, wealthy merchants, people, and, by the way, city folk, we might say, urban sorts of persons, and I think he is suggesting strongly persons within the church.

That may also be suggested by what he says in verse 17: whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him, it is sin. Although, in a sense, everyone in the world knows because of the reality of death and the uncertainty of life that their future does not belong to them. That is especially the case, that knowledge is especially present among believers.

Also, you note that although he clearly has people of means in mind here in 4.:3 through 17, again, James does not use the word *plutos*, wealthy. He does not use the word *wealthy* here. We have already seen a pattern that James uses the word *plutos* or *rich* only to refer to non-Christian wealth.

When he wants to refer to Christians who have wealth, he describes their wealth, but he will not use that word. That word is conspicuous by its absence here, whereas in 5:1, come now you rich, here you have it. Plousioi is used there, come now you rich.

Plousioi is used there, and that suggests that in 5:1 through 6, he is speaking to the wealthy who are outside the church. Now, of course, the warning here with regard to the, they say, admonitions to the self-sufficient has to do with the uncertainty and the brevity of life, that is to say, death. This is a warning against hoarding and arrogance.

He says, really, you ought constantly to live in light of the imminence of death, to live in light of the imminence of death. And he says that means living life now in submission to the Lord, who holds the future. So, rather than saying, today or tomorrow, we will do this. Instead, you ought to say, and of course, it's not simply a matter of saying this, but actually of expressing a deep-seated commitment and deep-seated conviction if the Lord wills.

That's to say, it's a matter of embracing the fact of, as I talked about here, submitting to God, of submitting to God in the sense of embracing reality and translating into life the reality that our future belongs not to ourselves but to the Lord. Now, I'm old enough to remember some people in the church environments, the people in which I grew up and lived as a child and a young person, and certain older saints who actually spoke this way if the Lord wills. And even when they would write letters or what have you, they would often include the letters DV, Deo Volente, if the Lord wills.

And I, of course, could become just simply an empty, pious gesture, but on the other hand, it could also be a reminder and a way of putting this kind of admonition into effect. He goes ahead, though, and talks to landowners, or at least talks about landowners here. I don't think that this is really addressed to the non-Christian wealthy in this book.

So, this is more of a rhetorical device of talking about the non-Christian rich by engaging in the rhetorical practice of addressing them. Come now, you rich, reap and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the labors who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out.

And the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man. He does not resist you. Now this, of course, is kind of a complement to 4:13 through 17.

Here again, you have wealthy, but he does address them explicitly here as placing, as rich, and the way he describes them makes it quite clear that they are not Christians. They are not part of the Christian brotherhood. He talks about the certainty of terrible end-time judgment and a pattern of life which actually involves robbing those who work for them.

These are not merchants. They are landholders. They are not city folk. They are country folk. They are not persons in the church. They seem to be persons outside the church.

The sanction that he has, the warrant that he has in his warnings towards them, involves not so much a really arrogant boasting about the future but a refusal to take seriously the responsibilities of life that they have, the responsibilities that they have, the moral responsibilities, the social responsibilities that they have in their lives and in the face of not so much death as he has emphasized in 4:13 through 17, but in the face of eschatological judgment as well. Now, come now, you rich, he says, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. But notice how he develops this notion of future misery, of end-time punishment.

He says that the reality of end-time punishment is being witnessed to you now by the decay and corruption that belongs to life within this world. Your riches have rotted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and the rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire.

In other words, the decay and the vulnerability of wealth due to what we might call the natural processes of the present life point ahead to end-time judgment upon the wealthy. That again, here you have people who, because they have means, believe that they have everything. Another way of putting it is that because they have everything materially in this world, they also have their future.

But he's indicating that even the things that you possess now, you rich, in this world, are susceptible to decay, to loss. And the kind of loss that you experience in terms of your material possessions in the natural processes of this present age is testimony to the loss, the ultimate loss that you have to look forward to in the future at the consummation. You have laid up treasure for the last days.

This a very ironic statement because, of course, he is saying that in the process of thinking that you can lay up treasure that will last, you are actually, that's to say, for the last days, you have actually laid up treasure, a kind of treasure of poison that will destroy you at the end. And he goes ahead with the description of their crimes here. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out.

This, by the way, when he talks about keeping back by fraud, suggests that there might have been some sort of tricky and clever and very unfair legal practice that they used in order to keep back or to withhold wages that they properly owed their workers. This may relate to what he had said back in 1:26. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? But the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you have kept back by fraud, cry out, a very vivid way of talking about this.

The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts, the Lord with his mighty armies. You have lived on the earth in luxury and pleasure, fattening your hearts in a day of slaughter.

You have condemned, you have killed the righteous men. There are actually two things here that he indicates are problematic. One, and of course most obviously, and the one that's most emphasized is this business of defrauding their workers.

The rich defraud those relatively poor persons who work for them, actually, of course, stealing from them, taking their labor without paying for it. This is the kind of thing, of course, that the prophets emphasize the Lord hates. A commentary on this whole kind of thing would be the book of Amos and the like.

The Lord absolutely, the Lord of the Old Testament, absolutely hates, absolutely hates this kind of thing. This leads to certain and severe judgments. That is a point of view of the Old Testament and especially of the prophets.

He may be suggesting, though, also, especially in verse 5 when he says, you have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. He may be accusing them also of withholding mercy, withholding help from the poor, withholding help from the poor.

Now, that is also the basis of judgment. Saying nothing for the moment about defrauding laborers from their wages, the very fact that you have lived in luxury and in pleasure in the midst of poverty, in the midst of need, lavishing all your resources upon yourself and your own pleasure without any regard for those who have the need, in the language thereof chapter 2, without giving them the things needed for the body, is itself a sin and worthy of tremendous judgment at the last day. Now he moves on in 5:7 through 20 as I say, to give admonitions to submit to the sovereign

hand and action of God, no longer to those who are sufficient, but to those who are suffering from.

And you have an element of contrast of course here. You also have an element of causation, especially from what he said with regard to the wealthy oppressors in 5:1 through 6 to what he will say with regard to those who are suffering from the wealthy oppressors in 5.7 through 11. Be patient therefore brethren, until the coming of the Lord.

Behold the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and late rain. Now, therefore, there in verse 7 ties, as I say, verse 7 in with the coming of the with what he said with regard to the harvesters and those harvesters whose cries have come, have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. So he is apparently here in verses 7 and following, speaking especially to those who have been victims of the wealthy oppression that he has been describing here in 5.1 through 6. Be patient, therefore, you harvesters, whose cries have come to the ears of the Lord of hosts.

Be patient, and the word here, of course, is *macrothumeo*, be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord or with a view towards the coming of the Lord. That is really the basic exhortation here. He will give another exhortation in verse 9, a coordinated one.

Behold the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and late rain. Notice that he is talking to those who are harvesters and who, therefore, live in this agricultural environment. He speaks to them, therefore, according to language that they understand, according to images with which they can relate.

The farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth. Notice precious fruit of the earth which means that that which is waited for is worthy of waiting for, it is worth waiting for, it is more than worth waiting for. The precious fruit of the earth being patient over it until it receives the early and late rain.

You also be patient and establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Now, that is a positive exhortation. He goes ahead and moves to the negative exhortation.

What does this business of being patient look like? What will one not do as one exercises this patience? Do not grumble brethren against one another that you may not be judged. Be careful, therefore, that you act now so as to experience the greatest size that is to come not as an event of your vindication and of your receiving the precious fruit of the earth but as an occasion for your experiencing judgment, the

same kind of judgment that your oppressors will rightly experience. Behold the judge is standing at the doors.

And then again, a kind of subordinate exhortation in verse 11, as an example of suffering and patience, brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord, an example both in terms of motivation because he goes ahead and talks about their happy end as motivation for not grumbling on the one hand and for waiting patiently on the other, motivation for that but also instruction for it. They give you an example not only to do it, motivation, but also what it looks like to be patient until the coming of the Lord. What it looks like not to respond to this kind of oppression, which seems for the moment as though it will never cease, which seems for the moment as though those who are oppressing you will never pay their just dues.

Exactly what does it look like to follow these exhortations that I have been given? That content, that specific content, what exactly is involved in what I am urging you to do has been set forth to you for your sake by way of example on the part of the prophets, and he will go ahead to mention on the part of Job. You have, in other words, scriptural examples. Incidentally, let me just pause and say here that one of the functions of the Old Testament in the Christian church, the Old Testament is part of Christian scripture within the church, is exactly what James says here.

To give instruction as to how to live in anticipation of God's great eschatological work. The Old Testament is not an end in itself it constantly lunges forward, it points ahead to a conclusion that is not found within the Old Testament itself. Old Testament people, the patriarchs, the sages, the prophets, righteous ones in the Old Testament, as Hebrews 11 points out, were on a journey to the kingdom of God only, the end of which they did not experience.

The whole of the Old Testament is a model of waiting for the great end-time eschatological act of God. And that's exactly what he says here. You have examples in the Hebrew scriptures of what it means to wait for God's action, what it means to wait for God's judgment.

As an example of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold we call those happy who were steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job and you have seen the purpose of the Lord.

Probably, what he means, you have seen it in these stories of the prophets and of people like Job in the Old Testament. You have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. Now, just a word with regard to this business about grumbling here.

Do not grumble, brethren, against one another that you may not be judged. Once again, he talks about speech. And one of the things really that binds especially 5:7 through 18 together is constant reference to speech.

Here, do not grumble against one another. In verse 12, he says, above all, brethren, do not swear. Again, that you may not fall under condemnation.

Note, do not grumble against one another that you may not be judged. Then he will say, do not swear that you may not fall under condemnation. And in verses 13 through 18, he talks about praying, about singing praise, about calling for the elders of the church, about their praying over him, that kind of thing.

All this, of course, involves speech. Part of what's involved in refusing to be patient, refusing to accept the exhortation to be patient on the part of those who are oppressed by non-Christian wrongdoers, waiting for the coming of the Lord, is to take out their frustration and their hurt on others in the community by grumbling against one another. They cannot, because of their weakness, because of their vulnerability, because of their inability to resist their oppressors, verse 6, they cannot strike out against them.

So, they strike out against those against whom they can strike out, namely, their brothers and sisters in the church. He says this is not, of course, the way that you should act. And again, he brings up this notion of improper speech.

Now, in verse 12, he says, But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your yes be yes, and your no be no, that you may not fall under condemnation. Now, again, he brings up once again this whole issue of speech, and he indicates that the evidence here, that what he says here is absolutely central to this whole business with regard to speech. There is, of course, some question as to exactly what verse 12 is doing here.

Many commentators have suggested, have argued that verse 12 is out of place. After all, as a matter of fact, it doesn't even fit particularly well in terms of my schema here, you know, admonitions to the self-sufficient, admonitions to the suffering, that is to say, to submit humbly, to submit humbly to the sovereign action of God, this kind of thing. So, exactly what does this business of swearing have to do with that? There is a possibility, and this was put forward by commentators such as Ralph Martin, that the reason why he mentions this prohibition regarding swearing here has to do, actually does have to do with the response to oppression, that it involves swearing very, very, very vengeance upon oppressors, swearing vengeance upon oppressors, taking an oath of vengeance against them or the like.

It might also, though, have to do with their being forced to swear in court proceedings or the like, as their oppressors bring them into court and attempt to rob

them of their wages by fraud through manipulation of the legal process. I think that is probably more likely here, the case. But of course, even if that is so, what he says with regard to not swearing would have a broader application than that.

It would go beyond that particular situation. This, of course, is one of those passages that echoes the teachings of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. You remember in the antitheses there in Matthew 5:21 through 48, you have the antithesis, you have the Jesus' instruction with regard to two oaths in 5:33 and following, again, you have said, you have heard that it was said to the men of old, you shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord which you have sworn.

But I say to you, do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is God's footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. And do not swear 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. Now, really, here in Matthew 5:33 through 37, the problem with swearing has to do with the fact that anything that you swear by really does not fall under your prerogative but God's. That's one argument against swearing at all here.

He does suggest, though, in verse 37, that a further problem with swearing is that it actually assumes a kind of looseness with the truth in general, so that your word can be established only by going to the extent of swearing by something beyond yourself. In other words, the very fact that you have to swear is an admission of mendacity. It is an admission that your word cannot be trusted otherwise.

It's indicative of a much deeper problem than swearing. It's indicative. The fact that one must swear in order to establish the truthfulness of what he or she says assumes that the truthfulness of what you say cannot be taken for granted simply on the basis of your saying it.

In all this discussion throughout James's speech of the use of the tongue, James is suggesting here that, in some ways, this is the most central and the most concerning. That's why he introduces it by saying, above all, my brethren, do not swear. At the center of James' concern with regard to speech is this whole issue of integrity of speech, integrity of speech.

But he does then, as I say, move forward in verse 13 with, he moves from those who are suffering abuse for exploiters, patience, to those who are suffering from sickness, prayer. Is there any among you suffering? Let him pray. Of course, this goes back to this emphasis upon prayer in faith, prayer towards God, asking God, asking in faith with no doubting out of a firm conviction that God gives to all persons generously without reproaching, and it will be given to him, out of the further conviction that

every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

So again, he picks up on that and develops that. Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise.

Notice that addressed to God is the appropriate constant stance of the person in whatever circumstance the person finds him or herself. In circumstances of suffering, addressing God in prayer. In circumstances of joy, of cheerfulness, of plenty, of singing praise, addressing God in praise.

But then he goes ahead and particularizes this notion of suffering. He really wants to focus upon sickness. Is any 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 sick man, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, he says, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed.

The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects. Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months, it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit.

Now, you note here that he once again is speaking to Christians here. Is anyone among you suffering? This goes back to my brethren in verse 12. Is any among you suffering? Let him pray.

Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is any 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. Now, this really does deal, of course, with a significant aspect of suffering.

This is, of course, especially, this is even more so true in the ancient world than in today where, of course, they did not have the advantages of modern medicine and therefore sickness was often very distressful. There was not much in the way of anodyne of relief. It was often fatal.

It was often much more serious than sickness is in our own day. There wasn't the kind of medicinal, medical help that was available and in terms of historical background, there was stigma attached to sickness. There was stigma attached to sickness.

A person who was sick was, for the time of the sickness, and of course, if the person was chronically ill, you may have in mind here, especially the chronically ill as well as

the acutely ill, if a person was chronically ill, that person was actually marginalized in society. Actually, part of what's involved in the healing of the sick in the ministry of Jesus is that Jesus humbly attends to the marginalized because the sick were marginalized, and for Jesus to touch the sick and to approach the sick and to heal the sick and to accommodate to the needs of and to acquiesce to the needs of the sick was actually an act of great humility on the part of Jesus because of the social stigma that attached to sickness and the like. So, this involves really a very significant aspect of real suffering on the part of these persons.

What we note here, though, is the emphasis in this passage upon the role of the community in prayer for the sick. "Is any 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." Now, the oil that he has in mind is almost certainly olive oil, and it was a kind of oil that was assumed to have some sort of medicinal value, some sort of medicinal value. But actually, it is being, this anointing with oil was not done for the sake of the medicinal value of that oil, but the fact that they used oil that was associated with healing more broadly was actually a metaphorical way of talking about the kind of healing that the Lord himself would bring about through this kind of anointing.

And he says, "And the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up." Now, this is very interesting language. It is true that elsewhere in the New Testament, healing is sometimes described in terms of salvation. There are occasions in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus' healing of a person, one thinks, I think specifically here of the story of the healing of the woman with the issue of blood for 12 years is described in terms of *sozo*, that is to say in terms of saved and the like.

And the reason why salvation language is used here with regard to this kind of physical healing is because it was actually seen as a kind of end-time deliverance. One of the aspects of cosmic evil that Jews believed held humanity in bondage and would be broken only with the coming of the kingdom, usually in most Jewish circles associated with the coming of the Messiah, was sickness. In other words, in the present evil age before the coming of the kingdom in the age to come, that two-schema that Jews adopted was sickness.

And embraced from the present evil age was characterized by cosmic evil, that is to say, that the world was held in bondage to evil, which manifested itself in various ways, in demon possession, in uncleanness, in injustice, in death, but also in physical sickness. Part of what's involved then in the coming of the kingdom, in the deliverance or the salvation of the kingdom, is release from physical sickness, is physical health. And therefore, Jesus' healings are manifestations; they are aspects of salvation, the end-time salvation from evil that he came to achieve in the kingdom of God.

And so, that I think is one reason why he uses the word savior, and this is very significant in terms of how we're to understand physical healing. It is in fact, physical sickness is an evil. It belongs to the realm of sin, death, and the devil.

And there is this kind of salvation that he said that is available. And the Lord, he says, will raise him up. Now once again, this business of being raised up from sickness is a kind of colloquial way of talking about healing, physical healing and the like.

But both with regard to the language of save and the language of raise up, egeiro, raise up, you have a kind of ambiguity because this kind of language also points to end-time deliverance. Salvation is often used in the New Testament to refer to deliverance or the salvation that we are yet to experience, that will come with the final coming of the kingdom, with the consummation of the kingdom, the arrival of the kingdom in terms of its final consummation. And the reference to raise up may, of course this, as I say, is often a colloquial expression in terms of being raised up from the bed of sickness, but this is also the word that is typically used for the resurrection, which may suggest that the person who is sick, whom the church prays for, may actually not be healed physically now, but that the prayer of faith on the part of the church will be heard, in that person will be automatically saved from this kind of sickness, will be raised up when he or she is raised up at the last day.

Physical healing here, in the name of the Lord, in the present time, actually points the head towards the kind of healing, the kind of perfect healing that will take place with the resurrection of the body at the last day. Now, he goes ahead to say that if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven, which suggests, as I mentioned earlier, that James does allow for the possibility that, in some cases, sickness comes as a result of sin. Therefore, concomitant to the healing of the sick person is a forgiveness of the sins that brought this sickness about in the first place.

But he does use a third-class conditional statement here, not since he has committed sins, that's what you'd have if the first-class conditional were used, but the third-class conditional, if he has committed sins, indicates that that is not necessarily the case. If perchance sin has been part of this whole business, then, he says, he will be forgiven. Therefore, he says, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed.

And here again, he's using healed in, I think, a very ambiguous way. Again, healed in a context both of talking about physical healing and the forgiveness of sins. And incidentally, in this phrase, you have the inflection in the Greek is very interesting, in that, so that, he says, you may be healed.

The fact that he uses that in the plural, that plural you is employed there, indicates that he's talking not simply about the healing of the individual who is sick or who may have committed sins, but in the process, a healing of the community. When

there is sin in the community, there is sickness and distress within the community. In other words, the sinful behavior on the part of any one member of the community has a deleterious effect upon the community as a whole.

It brings sickness, a kind of sickness, upon the community. So, what he's talking about here is the role of the community in relationship to the individual. The individual needs a community and the intercessory prayer of the community for that individual's healing.

But the community also needs a healing of individuals for its corporate health. Now, he goes ahead and substantiates this notion of prayer by talking about the effectiveness of prayer on the part of the righteous man. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.

Now, of course, what he's indicating here, I think he's really saying two things at this point. In terms of broader context, he's going back to the principle with regard to answered prayer that he articulated at the beginning of the book in 1.5 through 8, where he talks about the attitude, particularly the faith, of the individual. He's talking of the person who prays as being necessary for answered prayer, of being powerful.

And, of course, he also is going back to what he has said about prayer and answered prayer in chapter 4, especially verse 3. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Again, this principle that the key to answered prayer, to effective prayer, is the right relationship with God.

So, he comes back to that here. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects, he says, reminding us of the human condition that is necessary for answered prayer. But note that there's a connection here between the prayer of the righteous man in verse 16 and what he has said in verse 6: you have condemned, you have killed the righteous man.

You have killed the righteous man, he does not resist you. Now, he says, the prayer of the righteous man has great power in its effects. Now, we mentioned already that in the Old Testament there is a connection made between poverty, which involves not simply lack of money, it does involve that, but lack of power, vulnerability to oppression, between that kind of poverty and righteousness.

Here then, in verse 16, when he says the prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects, he is not only suggesting righteousness, that is to say, righteousness, the right relationship with God being key to answered prayer, but he is also talking about the prayer of an oppressed person. The prayer of a righteous person in terms of being poor, in terms of being needy, in terms of being vulnerable, in terms of

being oppressed, has great power in its effects. In other words, do not think that because you are suffering oppression, because you have no standing with other people, because you have no standing with powerful people, you therefore have no standing with God.

Quite the opposite is the case. That's suggested by what he goes ahead to say about Elijah in verse 17. Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves.

What does that mean? He was also vulnerable. He also suffered, and of course you go back to the Elijah narrative in 1 and 2 Kings, he suffered oppression, but that did not render his prayers ineffective, but rather it served quite the opposite purpose. God heard the prayer of the righteous sufferer.

Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months, it did not rain. And by the way, notice there is a connection between what he says with regard to Elijah's prayers. For three months, a few years, and six months, it did not rain on the earth, and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth his fruit.

That's exactly the same kind of language that he used in 5.7. Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth. Now he says in verse 18, and the earth brought forth his fruit in answer to Elijah's prayer.

Be patient over it until it receives the early and late rain. Again, this relates to what he says about Elijah. Then he prayed again and the earth and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit.

So, he's really talking here about, and when he's talking about the righteous man, he's talking about the person who is oppressed, who is marginalized, who is poor. Poor monetarily, yes, but especially poor in terms of resources and power. Do not be tempted to think because you are in that kind of situation in your life in the world that you are powerless with God.

Your powerlessness in this world actually means that you have more, that you have confidence that your prayers have great power with the Almighty. Now, he ends here of course with verses 19 through 20. And again, this may relate to what he has said with regard to admonitions to the suffering because 19 through 20 actually does in a sense involve an element of suffering to those who may rescue those suffering from the greatest loss of all, the loss of faith and the turning away from the truth.

My brethren, if any one of you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul, that is to say, the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of

sins. This phrase will cover a multitude of sins is probably an allusion to Proverbs 10:12 where covering a multitude of sins means preventing a multitude of sins, preventing future sins. Save his soul from death and keep him from future sin.

Again, it seems to me that this may be the climax to the entire book because this is what James has been doing all along, that is to say addressing those who may have wandered from the truth and bringing back those who have wandered from the truth, knowing that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. He ends this book really by insisting that we have, we in the Christian faith, in the Christian fellowship, Christian community, have responsibility for one another and that it's incumbent upon us, particularly in terms of this business of moral and spiritual wandering, which is the greatest suffering of all. It's the greatest loss of all.

We have the responsibility really to bring back, to win back a sinner who wanders from the truth, to bring that sinner back from the error of his ways. Of course, when he talks about wandering from the truth, I think you have to understand this in light of 2:19: you believe that God is one, you do well, even the demons believe and shudder. That is to say, wandering in the sense of adopting a life, a path of life, a way of life.

Notice he talks about the error of his way, the two ways in Jewish moral instruction, the way of the Lord and the way of sin. Who wanders from the truth in that person forgets or does not fully embrace the reality that God is one in God's goodness, in God's commitment to giving, and who, therefore, does not live out a kind of faith, a kind of confidence in the goodness of such a God. James has pointed out all along that this leads to a variety of problems and a variety of errors.

Really, every Christian is responsible for every other Christian. There is no such thing as isolated sin. Quite often, of course, the response is quite different.

Those in the community are repulsed by someone else in the community who has been in the community or maybe continues in the community and wanders from the truth, leading a kind of life that is offensive, objectionable, and clearly wrong. But the response should be not one of separation, not one of revulsion, but one of engagement, bringing that sinner back from the error of his ways.

And so that's how James ends this book, a powerful book, one that has had a great influence over the centuries. It's really a joy, isn't it, to be able to work with it.

This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 27, James 4:13-5:20.