The Epistle of JAMES

1 [1]James, a slave of God and of Sovereign Jesus Christ,[1] to the twelve tribes[2] that are in the Dispersion:[3] Greetings.

Various exhortations

[2]Count it all joy,[4] my brothers, whenever you fall into various trials, [3]knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance; [4]but let that endurance have a complete work,[5] so that you may be perfect and complete, falling short in nothing.

About wisdom

[5]But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask from the giving God,[6] who gives to all liberally and does not reproach, and it will be given to him. [6]However, let him ask in faith, with no doubting, because he who doubts is like a sea wave driven and tossed by the wind—[7]such a man should not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord, [8]*being* a double-minded man,[7] unstable in all his ways.

[9]Now the lowly brother should glory in his high position,[8] [10]but the rich *brother* in his humiliation,[9] because he will pass away like a flower

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[1] There is no definite article with 'Sovereign Jesus Christ', so I treat the phrase like a proper noun. Note that James, half-brother of Jesus (same mother), declares himself to be His slave. Another half-brother, Jude, does the same (Jude 1). They make no special claim, based on that relationship.

[2] If there are twelve, then none are 'lost'. Evidently James is writing to Jewish Christians. If this letter was written around 45 AD, it was before the explosive increase of the Gentile Church resulting from Paul's ministry. It would also be around the time of the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15 (see the footnote at Acts 15:19).

[3] See 1 Peter 1:1.

[4] Joy, not happiness or pleasure.

[5] Since trials tend to be unpleasant, we tend to try to cut them short, but if they are lessons that need to be learned, we need to endure until the lesson is fully learned. I believe Paul Billheimer (*Don't Waste Your Sorrows*) has given us a handle on a basic truth—the only way a human being can learn *αγαπη* love is through suffering. And the mainspring of God's Kingdom is *αγαπη* love, and God wants to prepare His servants for their responsibilities in the next world. So the lessons God wants us to learn come wrapped in unpleasant circumstances; but if we refuse a given lesson our spiritual growth stops. Further, sooner or later that lesson will return, and will keep on returning until we learn, or die (which is why Billheimer says, "don't waste your sorrows", because if we don't learn the first time we will have wasted that suffering). Notice verse 12 below.

[6] One of God's characteristics is that He gives, and evidently wisdom is something that He especially enjoys giving. What better time to ask for wisdom than when we are in the middle of a test?

[7] In verse 7 we have the generic term for man, but here the term refers to males.

[8] I assume that the reference is to his position in Christ, in spite of his low social standing.

[9] I take the point to be that he has already been humbled; otherwise he probably would not have trusted in Christ.

of wild grass.[1] **11**For the sun rises with its burning heat and withers the grass, and its flower falls off and the beauty of its face perishes. Just so the rich man will be withered in his undertakings.[2]

About testings

12A man who endures testing is blessed, because upon becoming approved[3] he will receive the crown of the life that the Lord[4] has promised to those loving Him.[5] **13**Let no one, upon being tempted,[6] say, "I am being tempted by God," because God is untemptable by evil, so He Himself does not tempt anyone. **14**But each one is tempted by his own craving, being taken in tow and enticed. **15**Then the craving, upon conceiving, gives birth to sin, and the sin, upon completion, delivers death.

16Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers: **17**every good giving and every perfect gift is from Above,[7] coming down from the Father of the lights,[8] with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. **18**Having willed it, He brought us forth by a word of truth,[9] so that we might be a sort of firstfruits of His products.[10]

19So then,[11] my beloved brothers, let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; **20**because a man's anger does not achieve God's righteousness.[12]

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[1] Presumably this is true of a lowly person as well, but they are usually less arrogant, more aware of their vulnerability.

[2] Sovereign Jesus said that someone who trusts in riches cannot be saved (Mark 10:24); not infrequently God uses financial reverses to bring people to Himself.

[3] So what happens if we squirm out from under the testing and are not approved?

[4] The so-called 'critical' text (really 'eclectic') omits 'the Lord', following 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality. Curiously, versions like NIV, TEV and NASB, that usually follow the 'critical' text, here create their own Greek text, following 4% of the manuscripts in reading 'God'.

[5] The proof of our love is obedience (John 14:21).

[6] The same Greek word can mean 'test' or 'tempt' (to tempt = to test in a moral context), the translator's choice being guided by the context. Here the context requires 'tempt'. God 'tests', but does not 'tempt'.

[7] Gifts coming from other sources may certainly strike us as pleasant and inviting, but will presumably have a negative effect upon our spiritual life.

[8] That is what the Text says, presumably referring to the sun, moon, etc. (shadows caused by those lights move and change).

[9] For someone to be born again (born from Above) he must be exposed to a word of truth. In John 14:6 Sovereign Jesus said, "I am the Truth".

[10] Why "firstfruits"? Before the advent of refrigeration, food could be preserved by drying, smoking, salting, etc., but by the time of the next harvest, nothing would compare with a firstfruit, which would be something special. We are special!

[11] Instead of "so then", some 4% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read "know!" (as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.).

[12] "A man's anger", not God's anger. We can and should be angry as a reflection of God's anger in the presence of evil and perversity.

About obeying the Word

21Therefore, laying aside all filthiness and overflow of evil,[1] receive with meekness the implanted Word which is able to save your souls.[2] **22**Further, become word doers and not just hearers, deceiving yourselves. **23**Because if anyone is a law[3] hearer and not a doer, the same is like a man observing his physical face in a mirror; **24**for he observes himself, then goes away and promptly forgets what he is like. **25**But he who looks carefully into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it,[4] he—not being a forgetful hearer but a work doer—he will be blessed in what he does.[5]

26If anyone among you thinks he is religious, not bridling his tongue but deceiving his heart, his religion is useless.[6] **27**Pure and undefiled religion before God and Father[7] is this: to care for orphans and widows in their adversity;[8] to keep oneself unspotted from the world.[9]

About partiality

2 **1**My brothers, stop holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Glory, with partiality![10] **2**For if a man with a gold ring, in fine clothes, should enter your synagogue,[11] and a poor man in filthy rags should also enter, **3**and you pay special attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit in this special seat," but to the poor one you say, "You stand there," or "Sit here at my footstool," **4**have you not been separated among yourselves and become judges with malignant

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1 Evidently James is not laboring under any exaggerated notions of their saintliness—he refers to rather gross manifestations of the old nature.

2 This sounds like a process—the Word has been implanted, but needs to be 'received' with meekness, and then must be practiced.

3 I render "law", instead of 'word', following some 30% of the Greek manuscripts including what is clearly the best line of transmission, in my opinion. Comparing verse 23 with 25, James is now talking about 'law', but copyists, having already written 'word' twice, in verses 21-22, could make the change (of 'law' to 'word') without thinking.

4 This is reminiscent of John 8:31.

5 Notice the emphasis on doing. This same emphasis is found repeatedly in Paul's epistles.

6 This topic will be developed further in 3:1-12.

7 The phrase "God and Father" works like a proper noun, referring to one being.

8 James is writing to Jews, who tended to be quite religious, tithing being an important feature. But what is the point of tithing? You cannot send your money to heaven, and God does not need it anyway. I take it that the purpose of the tithe is to help the needy; produce would have to be distributed before it spoiled.

9 The importance of this is developed in 4:1-6.

10 James is accusing them of being partial. Can you think of a single local church where a rich person and a beggar receive equal treatment?

11 That is what the Text says, "synagogue". James is addressing Christian Jews, and their culture is very strong. For many generations they have called their meeting places 'synagogues', so why stop now? Since the place or building is in view here, to render 'assembly' is less clear.

thoughts?[1]

5Listen, my beloved brothers. Has not God chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that He has promised to those loving Him? **6**But you dishonored the poor one. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into courts? **7**Do they not blaspheme the noble name that was called upon you? **8**If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture,[2] "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; **9**but if you show partiality, you commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors. **10**For whoever will keep the whole law, yet stumble in one *point*, has become guilty of all. **11**Because He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.[3]

12Speak and act as being those who are about to be judged by a law of liberty **13**(the judgment will be without mercy to the one not showing mercy).[4] *That law* exalts mercy[5] over judgment.

Faith and works

14What is the advantage, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? That faith cannot save him, can it? **15**If a brother or sister is actually naked, and is destitute of the daily food, **16**and someone among you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," but you (pl) do not give them the things needed for the body, what is the benefit? **17**Thus also that faith, if it does not have works, is dead, being by itself. **18**(But someone will say: "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith by[6] your works[7] and I, **by my works** will show you my faith [what he believes]."[8]

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[1] The verb 'separate' is in the passive voice, so some outside force has acted on them. The term 'malignant' is generally used of Satan and his works—something malignant is aggressively evil, it contaminates. Obviously their partiality did not come from God.

[2] We have access to the "royal law" through the Scriptures.

[3] It is more comfortable to regard the commands like beads on a string, but James says they are more like a pane of glass—if you break off a corner, the pane is broken.

[4] Even though inserted as an aside, this is a very serious bit of information! Since showing mercy is not one of my strong points…

[5] Perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts have 'mercy' in the nominative case, making it the subject of the verb (as in most versions), but some 80%, including the best line of transmission, have 'mercy' in the accusative case, making it the direct object (which to me makes much better sense). This accords with God's description of Himself in Exodus 34:6-7—He keeps mercy to the 1000th generation, He punishes to the 4th; the proportion is 250:1.

[6] Instead of "by", some 11% of the Greek manuscripts have 'without', as in most versions. The following word "your" is omitted by perhaps 8% (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[7] He is citing James' position.

[8] This delightful verse is generally misunderstood to this day. The translations that close the quote after the first 'works' do not make sense. The hypothetical objector has disclaimed faith, so for James to say, "Show me your faith", does not follow. James clearly teaches salvation by faith, a faith that is alive (if you are alive, you do things). But an orthodox Jew believes in salvation by works, so here James (who had once been

19You believe that God is one.[1] You do well. The demons also believe—
and shudder!) 20But you need to know, you foolish fellow,[2] that faith
without works is dead![3]

Examples

21Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered
Isaac his son on the altar? 22You can see that faith was acting together
with his works, and the faith was made complete by the works. 23And
the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "So Abraham believed God, and
it was accounted to him for righteousness."[4] And he was called 'friend of
God'. 24You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith
only. 25Similarly, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works
when she received the messengers and sent them out by a different way?
26For just as the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works
is dead.[5]

Careful with your tongue

3 1My brothers, not many of you should become teachers, knowing that
we[6] shall receive a stricter judgment. 2Because we all stumble in
many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man,
being able to bridle the whole body as well. 3Consider, we put bits in
horses' mouths for them to obey us, and we guide their whole body. 4Con-
sider also the ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce
winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the impulse of
the pilot may desire. 5So also the tongue is a small member and boasts
great things.

Just look at how great a forest a little fire can kindle! 6And the
tongue is a fire! The organization of wickedness,[7] that is how the tongue
is placed among our members, defiling the whole body and setting on
fire the course of life, *itself* being set on fire by hell.[8] 7Every kind of

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one) anticipates an objection from that quarter. The salvation-by-works person has a different faith.

[1] In his retort James cites a central tenet in Judaism. Since the demons believe the same thing, and it does not do them any good, something more or different is needed.

[2] Whom is James addressing here? I imagine it is the "someone" in verse 14 above.

[3] Instead of "dead", less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'useless' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[4] See Genesis 15:6. We like to quote Ephesians 2:8-9, but James is saying that we need to give equal time to verse 10. We are not saved by good works, but for good works. We do good works because we are saved, and if we don't, we probably aren't.

[5] I suppose the opposite is also true: a human spirit without a body is 'dead', as also are works without faith.

[6] James knew that he was included. We teachers will have to answer for what we teach, and especially if we have damaged others with our teaching.

[7] Satan uses our tongues to organize wickedness, our own and that of others.

[8] James here follows the Lord's example in using 'Gehenna' as a metaphor for the Lake of Fire. Since none of us can literally go to the Lake of Fire and dip our tongue in it, this must be figurative—a case of metonymy. With what, or whom, is hell most closely associated? In Matthew 25:41 Sovereign Jesus affirms that the Lake was "prepared for the devil and his angels". Apparently the antichrist and the false prophet will be the

animal and bird, reptile and sea creature, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race, **8**but no one among men is able to tame the tongue—an uncontrollable[1] evil, full of deadly poison.[2]
9With it we bless God[3] and Father,[4] and with it we curse the people who have been made in God's likeness. **10**Out of the same mouth proceed blessings and curses. My brothers, these things should not be that way. **11**A spring does not send out sweet and bitter *water* from the same opening, does it? **12**Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grape vine figs? Thus no spring yields salt water and sweet.[5]

True wisdom

True contrasted with demonic

13Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him exhibit his works in the meekness of wisdom, by his good way of life. **14**But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not boast and lie against the truth—**15**such 'wisdom' is not coming down from Above, but is earthly, soulish,[6] demonic.[7] **16**Because where envy and selfish ambition exist, there is unruliness and every foul practice.[8] **17**In contrast, the wisdom from Above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without

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first residents (Revelation 19:20), followed a thousand years later by Satan, presumably along with his angels (Revelation 20:10). The defiling, destructive activity of the tongue is the result of demonic participation.

1 Instead of "uncontrollable", less than 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'restless' (as in NIV, NASB, etc.).

2 Notice the violence of the description of the tongue—"organization of wickedness", "defiles the whole body", "uncontrollable evil", "deadly poison"—it would be difficult to be more emphatic. Obviously James is describing something extraordinary. One of Satan's most effective ways of lousing up our lives is by causing us to say things that we should not, and that by ourselves we would not. By this means he turns our homes, our schools, our work places into places of contention instead of peace. "No one among men is able to tame the tongue"—an unaided human being is presumably incapable of escaping from demonic attack, but the Holy Spirit can indeed tame our tongue, if we let Him.

3 Instead of "God", perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have 'the Lord' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

4 See note at 1:27 above.

5 In nature this does not happen—if it ever did it would mean that there were two veins of different water meeting just below the opening of the spring. James is affirming that our mouths produce words from two different sources—our own mind and demonic interference (since Satan is not omnipresent, he works through his angels, the demons). (Perhaps 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, replace the last sentence with, 'nor can salty yield sweet water' [as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.].)

6 It comes from the soul, not the spirit.

7 James is forthright about demonic interference in our minds. The prevailing ignorance on this subject in Christian circles is a calamity with terrible consequences—it condemns most Christians to a life of defeat.

8 Self-centeredness is the essence of sin; the more we give in to it the dirtier becomes our practice, the lower we are prepared to go to achieve what we want, or think we want.

hypocrisy. 18Now the fruit of righteousness is planted with peace by those making peace.[1]

Is not worldliness

4 1Where do the wars and disputes among you come from? Is it not precisely from your pleasures, the ones at war in your members? 2You crave and do not have; you murder[2] and covet and are not able to obtain; you fight and war. You do not have because you do not ask. 3You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, so that you may lavish it on your pleasures. 4Adulterers and[3] adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? So whoever may want to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.[4] 5Or do you suppose that the Scripture says in vain that the Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?[5] 6But He gives greater grace; therefore He says: "God resists proud ones, but gives grace to humble ones."[6]

<u>Is</u> submitting to God

7Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil[7] and he will flee from you. 8Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.[8] Sinners, cleanse your hands! Double-minded, purify your hearts![9] 9Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into dejection.[10]

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1 "Those making peace" are planters; they create an ambient of peace within which to plant. Is the "fruit" righteousness, or does righteousness produce it?

2 Remember 1 John 3:15, "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer." The fighting and warring is not done with guns or knives, but is real none the less. Our churches are full of people who have been wounded by other Christians.

3 Some 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'adulterers and' (as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.). (This is an easy case of 'like-beginning'.)

4 This is all exceedingly serious—if you make God your enemy, what are your chances? 1 John 2:15-17 is to the same effect. To love the things of the world (especially its values) is to adulterate against God.

5 This appears to be the only reference to the Holy Spirit in the letter. We do not have an exact match with any OT verse, but there are various references to God being jealous of His people.

6 See Proverbs 3:34.

7 This is a command, not an optional point. "Submit to God" is also a command, and comes first. To resist Satan in our own strength is to be defeated. To wield God's power against the enemy we must be in submission to God. I take it that the main way to resist is with words—commanding Satan to stop doing some particular thing; we must be specific.

8 Note that we have to take the first step, although apart from God's grace few of us will.

9 Notice that these are commands, which means that they are things that we can and must do. We have the Holy Spirit to help us, but we must take the initiative.

10 Dear me, we are not used to exhortations like this! I would rather hear, "Rejoice in the Lord always…" So what does James want? Well, all along his letter has been an exercise in 'tough love'; we have seen "filthiness and overflow of evil", "malignant thoughts", "foolish fellow", "uncontrollable evil, full of deadly poison", "bitter envy and selfish ambition", "unruliness and every foul practice", "adulterers and adulteresses", "enemy of God"—all in all, not a pretty picture. I take it that James is saying that there is no room for spiritual pride or self-contentedness, or a conquering hero

10 Humble yourself before the Lord and He will exalt you.[1]

Does not judge the different brother

11 Brothers, do not speak evil of one another. Because the one speaking against a brother and judging his brother speaks against a law and judges a law. So if you judge a law you are not a law-doer but a judge. 12 The Lawgiver and Judge[2] is One, the one who is able to save and to destroy.[3] So who are <u>you</u> (sg) to be judging someone who is different?[4]

Does not boast about tomorrow

13 Come now, you who say, "Today and tomorrow let us travel to that certain city, spend a year there, do business and make a profit;" 14 whereas you do not know anything about the morrow. For what is our life?[5] It is even a vapor that appears for a little time but then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." 16 But now you boast in your arrogant pretensions. All such boasting is malignant.[6] 17 Therefore, to the one knowing to do good and not doing it, to him it is sin.[7]

The coming of the Lord

Rich oppressors will be judged

5 1 Come now, you rich, howl as you weep over your distresses that are coming upon you! 2 Your wealth has decayed and your clothes have become moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded,[8] and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire—

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complex; if we really want to walk with God we need to fall on our faces before Him, put our mouth in the dust—in short, try to see our sin as He sees it.

1 If we exalt ourselves, God knocks us down; if we humble ourselves, He lifts us up—I imagine that just how far up He lifts us depends on a variety of factors.

2 Some 62% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, read "Lawgiver and Judge". The *Textus Receptus* (and all published 'Majority Texts') follows the 38% in omitting "and Judge" (as in AV, NKJV, etc.).

3 Compare Matthew 10:28.

4 I was surprised to find the Greek *ετερος* here, which usually refers to a different kind. I personally do not enjoy dealing with 'brothers' who are too different; I would rather question whether they are really 'brothers' at all! But James tells me not to do that. Each person is different (background, experiences, personality, training) and we must recognize that God can and will deal differently with different people. He uses one 'law' with me, another 'law' with you, and so on. A law is a set of rules or demands, so when I judge a brother I am questioning the way ('law') that God is working on him. As He is both Lawgiver and Judge, I will have to answer to Him for how I judged my 'brothers'. (For 'different one' the eclectic text currently in vogue has 'neighbor', following some 12% of the Greek manuscripts [as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.].)

5 I follow some 26% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in reading "our" rather than 'your'. I take it that the question is properly inclusive; James includes everyone.

6 It is aggressively evil.

7 The sin here is of omission, perhaps harder to recognize than sins of commission.

8 For some reason they just hoarded their wealth; they did not invest it, did not put it to work. They are doubly at fault—they acquired the wealth unjustly, and then just sat on it.

you stored it up for the last days.[1] 4Look, the wages of the workers who cut your fields, that were unjustly held back by you, cry out, and the loud cries of the reapers have entered the ears of the Lord of Hosts. 5You have lived on the earth in self-indulgence and luxury, you fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.[2] 6You condemned, you murdered the righteous—without his offering you resistance.[3]

Patience and perseverance

7Therefore, brothers, be patient until the coming of the Lord. Consider, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and late rain. 8You also be patient. Keep your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord has approached. 9Do not groan against one another, brothers, lest you be judged. Look, the Judge is standing at your doors! 10Brothers, take as an example the patient bearing of hardship and the steadfastness of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.[4] 11Indeed we count as blessed those who endure—you have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the final outcome *given* by the Lord, that He is very compassionate and merciful.[5]

12But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or any other oath. Let your "Yes" be "Yes", and your "No", "No", lest you fall into pretense.[6]

Righteous prayer is powerful

13Is anyone among you suffering hardship? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 14Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the congregation, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15And the prayer of faith will deliver the one who is sick,[7] and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.[8] 16Confess transgressions to one

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1 They probably thought they were hoarding if for a future 'rainy day', but they were actually hoarding it against themselves at the Day of Judgment.

2 Back in the old days, when an animal was slaughtered, you got to eat more than usual; things like liver, heart, tongue could not be preserved, so had to be eaten up.

3 The tense of the verb changes from past to present, which I found difficult to translate. Might this be giving the rationale of the murderer, 'might makes right'; someone who offers no resistance is like a sheep asking to be shorn? Or was James adding to their perversity?

4 According to the Record, the O.T. prophets generally did not have an easy time of it.

5 See Job 42:10-13. God gave him double what he had lost.

6 Some 5% of the Greek manuscripts read 'judgment' instead of 'pretense' (as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.). The more we talk, the more likely we are to say things that are not precisely true. See Matthew 5:37.

7 The implication is that the person is really sick, confined to a bed (that is why the elders have to go to him). Note that it is the faith of the elders.

8 The clear implication is that some sickness is the result of sin, but not all: "and if".

another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.[1] The prayer of a righteous one, being operative, is very powerful.[2] **17**Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly for it not to rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. **18**And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth produced its fruit.

Help the wanderer

19Brothers, if anyone among you should wander away from the truth, and someone should turn him back, **20**let him know that the one who turns a sinner back from the error of his way will deliver a soul from death[3] and will cover a multitude of sins.[4]

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[1] In my own experience, praying by myself for my own healing does not always work. When I ask others to pray for me, the Lord usually answers. God likes to promote 'mutuality' or interdependence.

[2] Just because we ourselves do not see, or are not allowed to see, an immediate result to our praying, does not mean that God is not answering. 'The just shall live by faith', and that includes praying.

[3] In spite of the demands of our doctrinal packages, I don't see how this can be referring to mere physical death. Apart from the Rapture, all Christians die physically.

[4] How can sins be covered? Only with the blood of the Lamb. The wanderer needs to be restored before he abandons the Faith completely.