

# The Last Impression

## A Look at the Conclusions of Various Epistles

### *James*

---

#### Initial Meeting

There probably wasn't one. This letter, unlike those of Paul where a specific congregation was written to about a specific issue(s), James is considered a general, catholic, or universal epistle written to God's people everywhere of every time covering topics God's people always need to hear about

#### Current Situation

Written to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations to help believers see what's important and not develop a big head about being saved by grace in Jesus. Have you been living your salvation by faith in Jesus? Do you hear the Word but don't do it? How can you say you have faith if you have no deeds? Is your tongue tamed? Do praise and cursing come out of the same mouth, which Jesus sanctified? Do you play favorites based on superficial things? If the answer to these questions is, "Not all the time," then do what James instructs and humble yourself before God who forgives, lifts up, encourages in trial of all sorts, and saves in Jesus.

#### Interesting Thought

James, the literal half-brother of Jesus, who it seems did not believe in Jesus earlier on during Jesus' public ministry and strayed from him, became a believer later and eventually was a pillar of the early church in Jerusalem. James writes with a rawness and honesty as one who was once "prodigal" to other prodigals. James is punchy, he doesn't play the rules of polite Christian speak, which is uncomfortable, but so necessary! James confronts us where we don't wish to be by telling comfortable Christians who think they (read: we) have it all figured out that they don't. Don't think mere belief of intellect and mere profession of words spilling from your mouth without works is saving faith. As an apple tree produces apples, so people who believe in Jesus just display it by their lives.

#### Last Impression

##### **James 5:13-20**

Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup> Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. <sup>17</sup> Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup> Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. <sup>19</sup> My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, <sup>20</sup> remember this:

Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

1. After being almost inflammatory in his method of calling out complacent Christians on their many blind spots, James ends his punchy and incredibly beneficial book with a call for God's people to pray.
  - In what circumstances shall a person pray? Why does James give this guidance? (Have we noticed a theme in these epistle conclusions??)
  - Practically speaking, if you want people to pray for you and be with you when you're sick or struggling, what should you do?
2. Is it possible for God to use miracles to heal us? What are the natural means God gives us so our bodies are taken care of?
  - I've never anointed anyone with oil during such visits. Have I been doing it wrong this whole time? What is James talking about in **v. 14**?
3. What's up with **v. 15**? Probably, you've prayed for healing on behalf of someone, desperately maybe, but it didn't happen. Why not? Explain this verse.
  - What, during the course of someone's physical ailment, is still always the primary concern? Why is that perspective so valuable?
4. **Verse 16** is quoted by us a lot, myself included. Why is context important on this one? Is it ok to take this thought out of context and apply it more generally as we generally do?
  - What would the benefit be of actually confessing our sins to each other?
5. In respect to the power and efficacy of prayer, why does James mention Elijah?
6. For being such a forceful letter, the final verses are a call to love one another in a major way. What does James tell us to do? How does **v. 20** give us such clear focus on what our obligation to one another is? How do we carry out this obligation without coming across as judgmental?