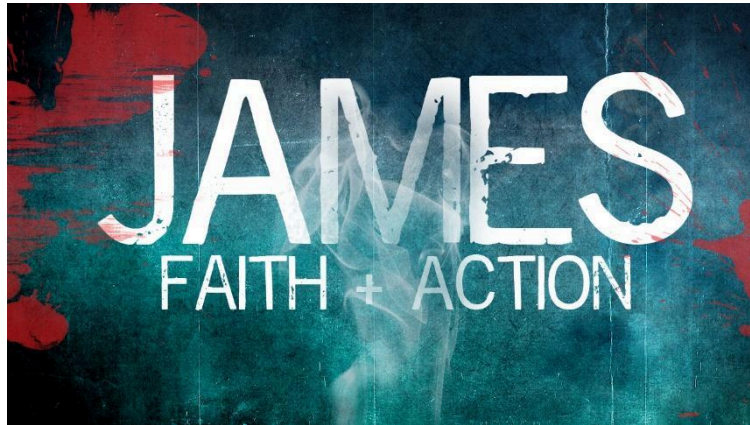


ABBEY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING



10.30 am 24th August 2025

Bridget Gurney leading and Simon Bird preaching

Theme: Lessons in prayer for ourselves and others

Prayer Time

Call to Worship

Praise the Lord, praise God in his sanctuary. Praise him in his mighty heavens.

Praise him for his acts of power, praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre. Praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

Song BPW 52

Jesus, we enthrone you,
we proclaim you our King,
standing here in the midst of us
we raise you up with our praise.

And as we worship, build a throne;
and as we worship, build a throne;
and as we worship, build a throne;
come, Lord Jesus, and take your place.

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Family Time Making Lemonade

Song MP 185

During the singing of this hymn our financial gifts will be taken

God is good
We sing and shout it
God is good
We celebrate
God is good

No more we doubt it
God is good
We know it's true

And when I think of His love for me
My heart fills with praise and I feel like dancing
For in His heart there is room for me
And I run with arms open wide

God is good
We sing and shout it
God is good
We celebrate
God is good
No more we doubt it
God is good
We know it's true

Graham Kendrick

Young people leave for their groups

Prayers

Praise

Praise my soul the king of heaven and earth. You are awesome. You are the wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Your majesty is beyond description. When I consider what you have created, I want to lift my heart and hands to you and say how great you are.

How great you are

Confession

Father, we have praised you for your creation, but we confess we haven't looked after it as we should. You created us in your image, giving us minds to think, lips to speak, eyes to see, and ears to hear. But Father, our thoughts are not always your thoughts. We don't always speak as we should. We often look and read things which are not right, and we don't always listen to what you are saying to us, we listen to the wrong things. Father we are sorry.

Forgive us Lord

Thanksgiving

Father, we thank you for our young people. Bless them as they go to their own rooms. May they learn more of your greatness and love. We give you thanks for all that you have given us. You have said that when we confess our wrongs, you will forgive us, and cleanse us. We trust your word, so thank you Father for forgiving us and cleansing us. Thank you that because your son Jesus, took our wrongs on himself, and took the punishment by being abused and killed in the most horrendous way, we have been made clean, and are forgiven.

Thank you, Father. Amen

1st Bible Reading Mark 6 v6b-13

2nd Bible Reading James 5 v7-20

Song MP 181

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name
I've been born again in Jesus' name
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His love as He told me to

*He said: 'Freely, freely, you have received
Freely, freely give
Go in My name, and because you believe
Others will know that I live.'*

All power is given in Jesus' name
In earth and heaven in Jesus' name
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His power as He told me to.

*He said: 'Freely, freely, you have received
Freely, freely give
Go in My name, and because you believe
Others will know that I live.'*

Carol Owens

Sermon

How do you react to pressures in life? Do you make lemons, or lemonade? What does James encourage us to do? When suffering, pray! When happy, sing! When sick, call for prayer! (5:7, 13-14). When you think about it, these are counter-intuitive - not the responses that come naturally. A question this morning is, 'How can we respond in godly ways to the pressures we face?' and that will lead us to our prayers for healing.

Over the last 10 weeks we have been looking at the letter of James, and we come to the last section. Next week Jill will lead a summary and review of lessons learnt, but today I look at how James closes off his letter.

We have seen how the letter opened with James talking about patience in suffering and prayer, and we have a good God. The central part cycles round three themes: 1. How we control our tongue; 2. How we treat each other; and 3. How we live a holy life. In this last section he returns to the opening themes of patience and prayer when suffering.

Let us remember what we know about the situation of these early Christians. They were mainly poor; it was a time of famine; they were suffering under rich oppressors and there was persecution. They were in a difficult situation, and bad reactions were coming out. They were speaking badly to one another, showing favouritism, making plans without thinking about God, impatient, grumbling. These reactions are all understandable in the circumstances. But what did James instruct them to do? James calls for seven responses: 1. Patience in suffering (5:7,8,10), 2. Not grumbling (9), 3. Not swearing (12), 4. Pray when suffering (13), 5. Praise when overcoming (13), 6. Ask for healing when ill (14), and 7. Bring someone back to the truth (19). In those difficult circumstances he asks for good reactions.

I want to think for a moment how we can have those good reactions? James says, '**Be patient and stand firm because the Lord's coming is near**' (9).

James reminds them that Jesus is returning. This completely changes our view of the world and is the reason look at difficulties differently. This is the history of the world in four steps. 1. Creation. God is a God of love, he made everything well and all was perfect. 2. The fall. Man sinned. Satan was given authority over the earth. All relationships were broken. 3. Salvation. God did not leave us, but rescued us by sending Jesus to die on the cross. 4. New creation. At the end Jesus will return and God will create new heavens and earth. The situation now is we are between Jesus' victory over sin and Satan and the full restoration. Jesus established the Kingdom of God, which is a foretaste of the new creation. Now, Satan is a defeated foe, but he still has power over the earth, which is why we still see suffering and sickness; but through the church we see some signs of the kingdom to come; we see some healing, some victory, but we still live with difficulties,

suffering, persecution. This picture helps us understand the present, why there is suffering in the world, but it encourages us to look up as our present difficulties will end. And in the meantime, because we know the end point, we work to change things: we bring in some of God's kingdom now! That is why we pray, 'Your kingdom come, on earth as in heaven,' (Matt 6:10).

This changes our present view of the world. James' seven responses make sense. We can be patient in suffering and count it all joy. We will stop grumbling. Praying is worthwhile and we can expect there to be some healing.

James turns to a specific situation where the response is prayer. '**Is anyone among you sick?** Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.' In this case it seems like a serious illness – this person asks the elders to come to him – and he is not expected to summon up his own faith – he asks the elders to have that. There is a huge amount we could say about the place of healing in the church. So, I just give some brief points.

It is God's general will to heal. He said, 'I am the Lord, who heals you.' (Ex 15:26).

Jesus healed everyone who came to him. But we are not Jesus, and our prayers are certainly not like this, so we come to this ministry with humility; it is not we who heal, but Jesus. A well-known concept in healing is soaking prayer: we do not just pray once, but we keep on praying.

Jesus healed because he had compassion (Matt 14:14). That is why and how we pray for healing.

The word James uses for healing has a wide meaning, including wholeness: save, rescue, deliver as well as heal. We include healing of the emotions and our spirit within our prayers. James links sin and confession here, so being saved from our sins, and receiving eternal life is the most important healing we can have. Forgiving others is important in healing.

James' words, 'the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well,' can be a stumbling block. They seem to promise healing every time, only if we have faith. So we say, 'I don't really have this faith.' James uses the example of Elijah (17-18) as an effective pray-er, which adds to our discomfort, except he says Elijah was a man just like us. He had his dark moments of depression and fear, so no one is disqualified. I approach this remembering we only need a mustard seed of faith. We are bringing someone to God, in an atmosphere of love, and it is up to Him what he does. I believe it will always bring a blessing to pray. Even when we pray with people on the street, Christians, and non-Christians, they go away happy with the sense of being loved and blessed – even if 'nothing happens.'

So, we have seen James closes his letter with seven responses to difficult situations. Without a worldview that has God in control and coming back they do not make sense. But within that worldview they make perfect sense, patience in suffering, prayer and praise in difficulty is how we have our own victory in circumstances.

We are giving an opportunity to put this into practice to come to God with any need and to support each other in our different situations. We shall offer prayer for healing, simply because that is what James instructs here.

Song 603

What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?

Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged:
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful,
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
take it to the Lord in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Jesus only is our refuge:
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In his arms he'll take and shield you;
you will find a solace there.

JOSEPH SCRIVEN (1819-86) / CCL Licence Number: 1763

A time for healing

Prayers of Intercession

Song MP 1072 In Christ alone

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light, my strength, my song
This cornerstone, this solid ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My comforter, my all in all
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone, who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
'Til on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground, His body lay
Light of the world, by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave, He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me

From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
'Til He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Keith Getty, Stuart Townend.

Blessing

I pray that the Lord will keep you and bless you in mind, spirit and health. May this coming week be one of great joy and peace for us all. Amen

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen

Notices for the week ahead:

Monday 25 th	Walk around Sulham
Wednesday 27 th	10.30 Renew Wellbeing 12.15 Bible Study
Thursday 28 th	10.30 Bible Study 10.30 Toddlers 7.30 Men's Bible Study
Friday 29 th	5.00 Table Tennis Club 7.00 Iranians Meal and Bible Study

Sunday 31 st	10.30 Worship Newcomers Lunch
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Saturday 6th September at 2.30 Induction Service for our new Minister