

James 5:1-12

“Pray, Be Patient, And Persevere”

James Ch 5 opens w/a great concentration of condemnation. – If someone were to say, “Hey, I want to read you something from the Bible.” Then, proceeded to read these words w/out telling you where they were found, you might be prone to think they were the castigating rebuke of one of the prophets of old!

For instance, Ezekiel writes, *“They will throw their silver into the streets, And their gold will be like refuse; Their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them In the day of the wrath of the Lord; They will not satisfy their souls, Nor fill their stomachs, Because it became their stumbling block of iniquity.”*¹ He’s saying to those whom he’s addressing, “Your money won’t be able to *save you nor satisfy* you, nor fill your *stomach* in the day of judgment. Your money won’t serve you in anyway... because it became *to you* a stumbling block of iniquity...” God can’t be bought off. People w/money are generally used to having their way. But God was telling them, “In the day of My wrath, your wealth won’t *help* you, only witness *against* you...” Now have a look at James Ch 5.

Vs 1-3

Wow! ... James, please, don’t hold back 😊. Where is this coming from? If you remember right, Ch 4 came to close having developed the idea of humble dependency upon the Lord. He was seeking to establish the proper perspective on life, recognizing how frail & vulnerable it truly is. He brought up the example of people saying that they were going to go to such & such & city, stay there for a year, buy & sell & make a profit... **Again, it’s not that it’s wrong to make a plan, but we’re not to *presume* upon anything outside of God’s *permission*. We can do those things, “if God wills” & that’s to be our attitude in the things we do & *plan* to do. But it’s into this context of arrogance & making money that James launches into Ch 5.**

Because though we wouldn’t say categorically that it’s the rich who develop an attitude of independence from God, we *would* say that generally, the *tendency* (definitely) will be inclined more in that direction.

& We should also say that the Bible doesn’t in any way condemn making money, providing for your family, even acquiring generational wealth to take care of your family after you’re gone. There were wealthy patriarchs in the O.T. who were faithful to God. There were wealthy folks (Zacchaeus, Joseph of Arimathea, Barnabas etc.) who followed Jesus.

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Eze 7:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yet, if you're going to read the N.T. honestly, you also have to conclude that riches can also present an additional & *significant* obstacle to the kingdom. In Matt 19 we read where Jesus told His disciples, *"Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*² & As you might imagine that statement blew them away. Because they were of the same mentality that many people adopt today. If someone is rich, they're blessed by God. If you're poor... not so blessed. But Jesus was trying to unravel that mindset. Because riches can work against our ability to recognize our need for God.

& In our passage, that's the mentality that James is speaking into. People trusting in temporary gain rather than looking to God... & He's trying to sober them up to the reality of the fact that your money won't save you. Don't deceive yourself & translate the creature comforts of this life as tantamount to things being good between you & God. It's not creature comforts that you need in your life, it's J.C.

So he says, *"Come now, you rich, weep & howl, for your miseries are coming upon you!"* Again, he's building upon what repentance looks like from the previous Ch. *"Lament & mourn & weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning & your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, & He will lift you up."* Christ brings comfort & assurance. Riches are a concern & embedded w/warning.

Don't *pursue* them, don't *trust in* them, don't *abuse* them, don't oppress others through the *means* of them. Here's a few more verses. 1 Tim 6, *"...those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."*³ Jeremiah Ch 9, *"Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the Lord."*⁴

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 19:23-24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Ti 6:9-10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Je 9:23-24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

One more. Prov 11:4, *“Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, But righteousness delivers from death.”*⁵ Trusting in something temporary will only serve as a snare to your eternal destiny. We can get caught up in “heaping up” treasure on earth when we ought to place our priority upon “laying up” treasures in heaven.

Paul told Timothy... *“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God...”*⁶ Jesus said, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*⁷

& Trust me when I tell you, we could go on & on. The Bible is replete w/scriptures concerning money & mismanaged priorities. You can't serve God & money. Jesus said you'll either hate the one and love the other, or else you'll be loyal to the one and despise the other.

But think it through. Come let us reason together, says the Lord. Why trust in the temporary, uncertainty of riches in the light of eternity? James says, “Look, your crops, your clothes, your cash... they're all going to burn. Your crops will be corrupted, your clothes will be moth eaten, your cash (gold/silver) will be corroded...” **They will all fail you. You can't take any of it w/you. Naked you came into the world, naked you'll leave. You brought nothing in, you'll take nothing out... The seeds of death and decay are found in all of creation. Wise (then) is the one who will look to & trust in J.C. Who has settled the sin issue through the blood of His cross.**

James says, “You're hoarding your wealth, heaping up treasure thinking it's somehow gain to you. The reality is: it will only testify against you.” On the day of judgment, it will reveal their prideful arrogance rather than a humble dependence upon the Lord. – Time won't allow us to press into this much farther but write it down & look it up later, Luke 12:16-21.

& Again, it's not wrong to make money, to save money... But here's the warning, don't hoard money, when is it enough? The flesh is never satisfied. It's like drinking sea water, the more you drink, the thirstier you get. How many millions does a man need?

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Pr 11:4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Ti 6:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 6:19-21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Is 50 million enough, 100 million? God doesn't give wealth for us to hoard, but for us to help. – When you read that passage in Luke, think about what that man did. Maybe instead of building bigger barns, he should've helped fill someone else's barn for the glory of God (in Jesus' name). But when we're always/only thinking of self... it'll snare us.

Vs 4-6

You've heard the phrase, "Money talks". James would agree. He says, "The wages of those whom you've defrauded... They've worked for you, you haven't given them their proper due & those wages cry out & have reached the ears of God..." It's like the money is crying out for justice & judgment because it's being held against its will. It belongs to the one who worked for it but is being held, heaped up by the fraudulent employer.

Now; here in Vs 4 & in Vs 6 James begins to make a connection for us. In the ancient world to which James was writing, a middle class didn't exist. There was a very wealthy class & a very poor class. People were paid every day at the end of the day because they needed their wages to put food on their family's table.

We read in Deut 24, "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the Lord, and it be sin to you."⁸ This is why we read in Vs 6 of James 5, "he does not resist you." It's because he had *no means* to resist. It was easy for the rich to win legal battles against the poor because they had no means to defend themselves. The rich would simply bribe the judge & the case would be closed, what could the poor man do about it? – But in Vs 4 James says, "Not only have the wages cried out against you, the *worker* has cried out as well & their cries have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

Not the Lord of the Sabbath, the Sabaoth. What does that mean? It could also be translated, "The Lord of Hosts" meaning, "the Commander of armies of the hosts of heaven." In other words, "They can't defend themselves, but their cries have reached the ears of their Divine Defender & your riches won't do you any good when you stand before *this Judge*." These workers had been promised a wage, but weren't being paid accordingly. Instead, their employers were taking the gains & living in luxury & God has heard the cries of His people.

⁸ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Dt 24:14-15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But this connection that James is making is that as a believer, your course of action if you're being treated unfairly, (even if you can't afford to make a case legally) should be to turn to God in prayer who hears your case & will respond righteously.

& To kind of pivot here, the overarching point here is that we're to pay what we owe. You can apply that in any context. As believers, we don't hold back on paying our bills, our taxes, or whatever it is we owe. If you can get a tax break or whatever great. But to not pay what's owed is tantamount to stealing. You're given a service at a certain price & that's the end of it. Honor the Lord, pay your bills.

& I'm not saying that there's never extenuating circumstances. You lose your job, you're trying, you're falling behind... that's different than intentionally avoiding your obligation...

But this is why James speaks of murder & condemnation here in Vs 6. Because not paying someone could be the difference between life/death. In Luke 16 you'll find a rich man who fared sumptuously on the daily. Lazarus laid at his gate & literally was given crumbs from his table (table scraps at best). What happened? Lazarus died. The rich man didn't go out there & run him through w/a sword, but condemned him just the same by w/holding from him...

& At the expense of sounding like a broken record I'll say it again. There's nothing in the Bible that condemns acquiring wealth. However, the way we acquire it, & what we do w/it once we have it, is a big deal to God. God pays attention & will judge the way we make money & how we spend it...

Ok... James anticipates a reply, "We have prayed, but we're still being mistreated! These wrongs aren't being righted..." But following prayer comes the need (James explains) for patience & perseverance.

Vs 7-8

Notice how the tone turns from harsh condemnation to compassion & consolation. The essence here is this. Obtain/maintain the eternal perspective. Not every wrong is going to be made right in this world. But when the Lord returns, He's going to settle every account & right every wrong. Our hope isn't in a political party, but in the Person of J.C.

& I know this isn't anything new to you, but as believers you've just got to understand that in this world things aren't always going to go your way nor are you always going to get a fair deal. That doesn't mean we roll over & take it.

But our hope isn't in this world. Look how they treated Jesus. Do we think we somehow deserve better? If this world has rejected God, how do you anticipate that it will treat the godly? The Bible says, *"In the world you will have tribulation;"*⁹ & Again, *"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."*¹⁰ Patient endurance is the name of the game until Jesus returns.

However, it's not w/out expectation. In fact, it's our hope in Christ that strengthens & enables us to patiently endure, to hold up under the weight & stress of this world. James says, "Look at the farmer, notice how he waits for the precious fruit of the earth." He doesn't cultivate the ground, plant the seed & go out the next morning to see if it's time to harvest. There's patience involved, the harvest is coming, you can expect it ultimately, but it doesn't happen immediately. (He's taking us from that exhortation to the illustration).

The farmer continues to work, even when the crop can't be seen. So to w/you & me, the harvest seems so far away, but we need to continue steadfastly, patiently enduring, being busy about the work of the Lord until we see Him face to face. The farmer has to wait for the early/latter rains. Irrigation on today's level didn't exist in the ancient world. The planted having to trust that the rains would come after the crops were planted so that they could take root, & again before the harvest so that the crops could bear fruit.

So to when we're having to deal w/difficult people, or a relationship is struggling & we're praying... Give God time, He's working in ways we don't even see or recognize. Be patient. Don't *lose* heart, *establish* your heart... strengthen your resolve to trust in the Lord (through prayer, through God's word, through godly counsel, fellowship w/one another, through worship). Meanwhile, (like the farmer who keeps faithfully tending to the field) continue to serve the Lord. Keep working & waiting because Jesus is coming & we want to be found busy about our Master's business when He returns.

The farmer plows in hope, expects a reward, continues to work, depends things beyond his ability to control (early/latter rains), he patiently waits for a long time, regardless of seasons/circumstances. So to w/you... & so to w/me.

& Just so you see it, a lack of patience isn't really just a little character flaw. Scripture commands it of us. It's fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). *Love*, is patient (1 Cor 13:4). Eph 4:2 commands us to be patient *w/one another*...

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 16:33). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ac 14:22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Keep your eye on the finish line, maintain the eternal perspective, the coming of the Lord is at hand (meaning, it's right there, not far off). The 1st coming of Jesus initiated what the Bible refers to as "the last days". It's as if we were brought right up to the edge & now we're running parallel to it. It's right there. God is patient, He's waiting for as many people to turn to Him as possible... Be patient, Jesus is coming.

Vs 9

I'm not sure if this is exactly what James is aiming at or not, but have you ever noticed that when you're going through tough times, you find yourself short w/other brothers or sisters? He says, "Don't allow your frustration, your exasperation to turn you inward on one another." Grumbling & complaining is something that God just can't stand. Read Exodus. He takes it personally, we're saying we have issue w/His governance over our lives. Rather than trust in the fact that He's working toward our eternal good & His eternal glory, we gripe. The Lord will deal w/that too! (May God help us to trust Him more!)

Vs 10-11

He says, "Look, you're not alone in tough times, in suffering (suffering evil), in affliction, in persecution & patience, consider the prophets & how we count them blessed as they endured." Hebrews 11 speaks of how they were scourged, slain w/the sword, tortured, tried, chained & imprisoned. They were stoned to death, tormented, forced to wander in deserts, mountains & dens... of whom the world was not worthy! & How they patiently endured, awaiting the promise of God... How many of us have resisted unto bloodshed striving against sin? He says, "We count them blessed." Listen, there's no victories apart from battles, no peaks w/out valleys, no perseverance apart from trials... If you want the blessing, prepare to carry the burden & fight the battle... Close

Now when he speaks of Job, maybe your Bible says "patience" but it's not the same word. Translated better, "perseverance". When you read Job, he got a little impatient (& who among us could blame him). But he never relented in his perseverance. He didn't charge God w/wrong, but trusted Him regardless of what entered the equation of his life.

& In the end, God blessed Job beyond anything he could've imagined. He was never given the "why". But He knew He could trust in "Who". "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you (says the Lord). Thoughts of peace & not of evil. To give you a future & a hope."

Satan would've done so much more to Job given the opportunity. God said, "No". The Lord is merciful & full of compassion & sustained Job throughout his trial.

Vs 12

Don't be flippant in your word to others. Don't be the kind of person that has to back things up by swearing. That testifies to your lack of integrity. Just be a person of your word. If you say you're going to do it (if you agree to something, a wage or whatever) than do it. God keeps His word to us, we're to keep our word to others...

Prayer Points:

God, we thank You for Your word to us. Both in exhortation & consolation. May we honor You w/our resources, be a people of prayer, casting our cares upon You knowing that You care for us. & May we patiently persevere until You come again. Thank You for the hope we have in You. Be glorified in our lives...

God is merciful & full of compassion. & He extends His mercy & grace to you in the Person of J.C. Who settled the sin issue through the blood of His cross. Forgiveness of sin, newness of life finds you in J.C. Trust in Him today.