

## James 5:1-12

### "Be Patient And Persevere"

Paul the apostle said to the saints in Acts Ch 14, "*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.*"<sup>1</sup> How many of you can bear witness to that reality? That as Jesus said, "*In the world you will have tribulation;*" *John 16:33* He's being transparent about the fact that trials/tough times are no stranger to the child of God. This is why as we spoke last week, it's so critical that we "count the cost" when we enlist under Christ. Trust me when I tell you that you will become quickly disillusioned if you believe that surrendering your life to Christ will end all your struggles & now a problem free, primrose path awaits you... Jesus said, "*...narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*"<sup>2</sup>

Jesus never claimed to be the *easy* way, what He claimed was to be the only way, the truth & the life & that no one would come to the Father but through Him. However He was also very clear that no servant is above his master & if they persecuted Him, they would persecute those who belong to Him. However there is hope, because even as others *listened* to Him; there will be those who listen to us.

& Those of you men who were able to make it out to our Thursday night men's study, that was one of the main points we emphasized. That it is our mission (as the church) to help as many people as possible find what their heart is looking for. There is a universal longing in the heart of every person on this planet. The frustration sets in, in that there is no capacity *w/in* myself to content myself. There has to be something *outside* of myself that can bring healing, bring hope & wholeness of heart... God has placed *eternity* in the heart of every man & therefore only the eternal God can meet the need that's in the heart of all men. Mankind is longing for restoration, for reconciliation to God, for salvation, but they just can't bridge the gap... That of course is where Jesus comes in. The bible says that God was in Christ *reconciling* the world to Himself. We find forgiveness, healing, wholeness of heart as we turn from our sin & trust in J.C. who was crucified for our transgressions & raised for our justification. The bible says, "*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 [Ac 14:22]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 [Mt 7:14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 [2 Co 5:20-21]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Well, we come to James Ch 5 & the context continues...He's been rebuking the mentality that presumes upon life apart from God. That we're gonna do this, or we're gonna go there & make money, do our thing & then take off...

It's not that God is against planning it's that He's against presumption apart from Him. James says, "You say you're gonna do 'this' next month, 'that' at the end of the year, you don't even know what's gonna happen tomorrow..." "For what is your life? It's even a vapor that appears for a little time & then vanishes away." We're not guaranteed tomorrow, we're to trust *in* the Lord & commit our plans to the will *of* the Lord.

James has been developing the principle of complete dependence *upon* the Lord. Now he begins to rebuke those who are most likely to live independently *of* the Lord...the rich.

### Vs 1-3

Hey, James is kickin it old school! These words are reminiscent of the prophets of old! "Come now, you rich, weep & howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!"

One comedian said, "If money talks, all it ever says to me is 'good-bye!'" Anyone here who can relate to that? 😊

Now one thing we want to establish straight out of the gate is that it's not sin to be wealthy or to have money. James isn't saying that the rich go to hell while the poor go to heaven. You don't have to think too hard to come up w/a whole list of people (godly people) in the bible who had scores of money. From Abe, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, of course David, Solomon... There were rich people who followed Jesus; Matthew, Zacchaeus, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Lydia, Barnabas...

The problem isn't money in the hand; it's money in the heart. These are people who are trusting in riches rather than in the living God; we can know that because in Vs 7 James addresses the believers, making a distinction from those whom he's referencing here. This seems to tie back into the rich he brought up back in Ch 2 who are getting great *seats* in the church but are oppressing the believers *in* the church who are poor.

So God's not concerned about someone having money, it's *how* they get it & *what* they do with it that becomes the issue; it's the attitude of one's heart toward money, that's where the problem comes into view. James isn't speaking to the one who trusts God & controls his/her money, but the one who doesn't trust God whose money controls them... It's an ongoing struggle in the human heart, the pursuit of wealth to the exclusion of godly priorities. That's why the bible is constantly warning us against prioritizing the pursuit of wealth.

Not because money is evil, but because it can so easily overtake us, corrupt us & compromise our relationship w/God. That's why Jesus said, *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."*<sup>4</sup> (That is, God & money). It's been said that money makes a great servant, but a terrible master (& that's true).

The bible says, *"Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, But righteousness delivers from death."* Proverbs 11:4 You see, it's all about keeping the main thing, the main thing. J.C. & Him crucified; He is to be the primary pursuit of our hearts, to know Him & the power of His resurrection, & the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, we might attain to the resurrection from the dead. In Jeremiah Ch 9 we read these words, *"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.<sup>5</sup>

However those here in James Ch 5 don't glory in the Lord, but in their wealth. James says, *"Weep & howl for the miseries that are coming upon you."* Makes me think of the rich man & Lazarus in Luke 16, let's turn there together (Luke 16:19-31)

He fared sumptuously, extravagantly every day, no mind toward the need right outside his gate. Here's the question, how did his money benefit him in the end? Riches don't profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, yet lose his own soul?

James points out the 3 primary means of wealth in his day; crops, clothing & gold hard...coin...it wasn't cash really; it was...coin 😊. He says, your crops will rot, your clothing will be moth eaten & your coins will corrode, you've heaped these things up when in reality you should've been helping others out... God doesn't give wealth to be hoarded up, (hoarded up), but to be funneled out. Now again that's not to say God has a problem w/savings. We know He doesn't, Prov 13:22, *"A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children,"*<sup>6</sup> The bible teaches that if we won't provide for our own (especially our own household) we've denied the faith & are worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim 5:8).

But there can come a point whereby we can't spend it all, our kids won't spend it all, & we go from saving to hoarding when we should be helping...

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Mt 6:24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Je 9:23-24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Pr 13:22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jesus said we're to lay up treasures in heaven, there they won't rust, the moth won't destroy, it won't be stolen. We're to invest in the eternal, perhaps you've heard it said that you can't take it w/you but you can send it before you. *You see where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. We'll either invest into the things of God, or the things of this world. Don't trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God... that's what the bible says (1 Tim 6:17).*

The irony here is that they've heaped up riches as if they will help them when in reality they will testify *against* them. They've w/held what is right from those to whom it was due...notice.

### Vs4-6

*It's a reference to the corruption of the courts. Someone was asked if they were familiar w/golden rule & they said, "Yeah, the one who has the gold makes the rules!" That's pretty much what James is talking about here, "You've condemned, murdered the just; he does not resist you."* He doesn't have the money to fight you, you control the courts, you have the great lawyers, he lives in poverty what's he gonna do?

Back in that day, if you worked for a day, you got paid that day so you could eat that night. It was literally a day to day question of if you & your family would eat that day. *The middle class was virtually non-existent. You either had money or you didn't. If you hired someone to work in your field & didn't pay them at the end of the day they didn't eat that night.*

Of course God knowing the wicked nature of man's heart made sure to enforce the principle of paying the worker his wages in His word. He said, *"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."*<sup>7</sup> As we read last week, "To him who knows to do good and doesn't do it, to him it is sin."

If you own or run a business and don't pay your employees a fair wage; that's wrong. James is saying, "Hey, the laborer is worthy of his wage." Of course in this case the employer isn't paying up at all. He's ripping off his employees & God takes the side of the poor who've been taken advantage of & ripped off.

He says, "The cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

<sup>7</sup> The New King James Version, 1982 (Dt 24:14-15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God isn't deaf to the cries of injustice. This word "Sabaoth" isn't "Sabbath".

This work speaks of the Lord of Hosts, the Commander of the armies of heaven. You've aroused the attention of One who commands all the armies of heaven (translation = that's not healthy for you!)

Like the Lord's reprimand in Jeremiah 22 when He said, *"Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness And his chambers by injustice, Who uses his neighbor's service without wages And gives him nothing for his work,"*<sup>8</sup>

These people promised their laborers one thing but delivered them nothing. **So they were stealing from the people who needed it to live & using it to "fare sumptuously everyday", living in luxury. James says, "You've made yourself like a calf that grazes everyday getting fat for the day of slaughter."**

Yes, money talks. The question is what will it say of me, what will it say of you when we stand before Christ? Paul told Timothy, *"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But 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."*<sup>9</sup>

### Vs 7-8

You see now James addresses the family. He says, "Hey listen family, these people are storing up their own judgment, so you be patient." His tone turns from one of *condemnation to consolation*.

But here's the deal, he's letting us know that not every wrong will be made right in the here & now while we're on this earth. He says, "It may need to wait until the coming of the Lord. But God will deal w/it in His way, in His time." As for you, as for me it's our part to be (what's the word?) "patient." We're talking about a long-protracted restraint of the soul from yielding to passion, especially the passion of anger.

It's the same word that's often used in regard to God's patience w/man. God will deal w/injustice, but we must be patient. Don't think short term, think long term, look ahead to the Lord's return. That's when God will ultimately handle the affairs of man. He says, "Consider how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth."

<sup>8</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (Je 22:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>9</sup> The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Ti 6:7-10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

They have to wait for the early rains to soften the ground (around October in the middle east). Then they have to wait on the latter rains (around April-May) to bring their crops to maturity. They can't make it rain, they have to depend on the Lord to send the rain at the proper time...they have no control of the circumstances that surround them. Even so James is saying, "You may not have any control over the circumstances that surround you, but trust in the Lord; be patient, don't give up, don't give in; it's learning to overcome natural reactions w/a supernatural response..." "establish your hearts."

If you're sowing the right seed, you'll reap the right harvest in due season. It's like Paul said when encouraging the Galatians. He said, *"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."*<sup>10</sup> "Establish" your heart. That word "establish" means "to fix something so that it stands upright and immovable."

Often times that will happen as we lift our focus from ourselves & our own situation & place our attention on the Lord. Not looking through the lens of self pity, but rather, "God may You receive glory, somehow & in someway; don't let me waste my suffering. Redeem this situation somehow that I might grow & that you might be glorified."

Perhaps you've been somehow exploited, be patient. God will vindicate you, establish your heart, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Remember when Joseph had been done wrong over & over again, sold into slavery by his brothers, lied about & put into prison by Potiphar's wife, forgotten for years & years... until one day God lifted him up, set him in the seat of the most powerful man on the face of the planet & through the wisdom God gave him countless millions were saved alive in a time of global famine... The time came & his brothers (the one's who sold him into slavery) stood before him. He could've done anything he wanted to them (& they were afraid he was going to have them executed). But he said, *"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."*<sup>11</sup> He was patient, all those years, established his heart & fixated his focus on the Lord. He didn't grow bitter, didn't look at life through the lens of self pity... But rather gave God glory through it all.

You see, if we really believe that God is in control than these people who exploit us, or in someway do wrong to us become instruments through which He shapes us & molds us more & more into the image of Jesus. You see, God will prune us, plow our hearts, because He wants to bring forth a spiritual harvest in our lives.

<sup>10</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Ga 6:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>11</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Ge 50:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



He wants us to bear the “precious fruit” of the Spirit, but we’ve got to establish our hearts. (Which is what we’re doing as we gather together & pray, study the word, resolve to be doers of the word, not hearers only, we’re establishing, resolving our hearts to be upright & immovable). Don’t turn on one another, start grumbling at one another, you don’t have time to go there, the Lord’s return is way to close for that...

### Vs 9

Many time frustration & impatience w/God will lead to frustration & impatience w/God’s people...but if we start using sickles on one another we’ll miss the harvest! Just make sure your heart is rooted in Christ...

Notice 3 times James has brought up the Lord’s return in 3 Vs... “Until the coming of the Lord, for the coming of the Lord is at hand, behold, the Judge is standing at the door!”

Since the ascension of Jesus, human history has been brought to the brink of consummation & it’s running parallel to the brink... Jesus could return at any time. That should aid in your resolve to be rooted in Christ... we wanna see Jesus face to face; don’t allow your heart to become calloused over & unloving; we’ve got to stay true to the Lord & tender toward one another... Don’t grow weary in doing good.

### Vs 10-12

James says, “Hey, be a person of integrity, & trust in the Lord whole heartedly.” If you have to start swearing to gain someone’s trust, that means you’re not very trustworthy. Just be a person of your word...

But back in Vs 10 he says, “You & me, we are not the 1<sup>st</sup> ones to suffer unjustly & need to wait on the Lord to vindicate our integrity.” He says, “Think about the prophets, they suffered wrong having done no wrong. Yet they didn’t go on rampage, they just commended themselves into the care of the Lord; they were no less human than we are.” We could think about Jeremiah, placed into stocks, thrown into prison, lowered into a miry dungeon & left for dead. Ezekiel suffered, Daniel was thrown into a den of lions. Why? Because of something they did wrong? No, but because of what they did right!

Hardship might not be in your life because of wrong in your life, it could be there because of your faithfulness to the Lord! Satan wants you to believe God is against you, that’s why the circumstances that surround you (as His child) are so difficult. But it could be that it’s because God is very much for you & He’s wanting to do something great through you. There are no victories w/out battles, no mountain peaks w/out valleys...

“You’ve heard of the perseverance of Job:” The quintessential example of patient endurance & perseverance, a model of constant trust in the midst of calamity. In the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 Ch’s he loses his wealth, his health & all of his family (w/the exception of his wife who told him to curse God & commit suicide [how’s that for a helpmate]).

But the book of Job teaches us that there is a much higher purpose behind suffering that simply punishment for sin. God wants to do great things in your life, God is gracious & merciful...

Again Satan wants you to get impatient w/God. An impatient believer is a powerful weapon in the hands of the enemy; it robbed Moses of the Promised Land. The impatience of Abe led to the birth of Ishmael; the enemy of Israel; Peter’s impatience almost made him a murderer... If he wasn’t such a bad aim w/a sword he would’ve been!

But Job persevered, & in the end we’re able to see the compassion & mercy of the Lord. We don’t always see it in the midst of the trial, but in the end it’ll all be made clear. That’s what James is pointing us to, the end, the eternal perspective. So many people lead life w/a view toward the now, but what will you do in the end?

Job suffered for no wrong of his own. He would become (in certain respects) a picture of Jesus, the perfect Son of God who would suffer, not for His own sins, but for the sins of the world. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him; now don’t you want to reap the fruit of seeing Him face to face?

Than by God’s grace may we learn patience, establish our hearts & persevere. Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

God Your word is good, it’s direct & it’s clear. We realize that there’s a certain respect w/which 90% of the people in this nation are rich compared to those to whom James was writing in his day. Help us that we not trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in You, the One True Living God. Lord we know You’re at the very door & Your return is closer today than it’s ever been, may that spur us on to patient perseverance knowing that soon we’ll see You face to face.

If you’re not ready to see Jesus face to face than let me urge you today to turn from your sin & believe on the Lord J.C. There is a longing in your heart, something that stays just outside of your grasp for fulfillment, contentment & rest. That something is a relationship w/Your Creator who has loved you, & given Himself for you upon the cross. God stands ready to forgive you of all of your sin, surrender to Him & you’ll never be the same...