

James

Practical Principles for Life

Zoom Bible Study | Lesson Six

December 12, 2023

Chapter 5

James 5:1 – 6:

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. ²Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

James begins by harshly condemning "you rich" people, warning them of misery headed their way. Jesus offered a similar warning to wealthy people in **Luke 6:24-25:**

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. ²⁵ Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep."

The wealthy landowners James singles out were non-Christians who used their wealth to harm others. God will not allow injustice to go unpunished. The temptation to trust wealth instead of God is a trap, and most of us are vulnerable to it. Their crime was uncontrolled greed that resulted in oppression of the poor.

Luke 12:15: *Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."*

James described the consequences of misusing riches:

- Riches will vanish - verses 2-3a. There is no security in riches.
1 Timothy 6:17: *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*
- Misused riches erode character - verse 3.

How many people do you know who are wealthy and have used it for good and have not been in some way corroded by their wealth?

What are some griefs we bring on ourselves when we love money?

How can we "hold back wages"?

James 5: 7 – 12

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰ Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

¹²Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.

After addressing the rich oppressors, James turns again to the brethren and says, "then" - be patient. The good news is that there will be an end to this world's wrong and this world's suffering, when Jesus returns. James refers to it three times - verses 7, 8 and 9.

- Be patient until the Lord's coming
- Be patient because the Lord's coming is near
- The Judge is standing at the door!

James reminds these believers to stay focused on eternity and what will matter in eternity.

Titus 2:11-14: For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹²It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

John 16:33: *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

What are you struggling with now? Money issues? Relationship problems? Health deterioration? Ask God to give you an eternal perspective.

James used two different words for patience:

- Verses 7, 8 and 10: - describes the attitude of self-restraint that usually represents long-suffering patience toward persons rather than things.
- Verse 11: - describes patience with respect to conditions or situations. It means to stay put and stand fast when you'd like to run away.

James uses three examples of patient endurance:

1. **The Farmer**

Why does a farmer have to be a patient person?

- You don't reap overnight.
- You can't control the elements.

Why was the farmer willing to wait patiently? Because it yielded a "valuable crop".

Galatians 6:9: *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

There are seasons to the spiritual life just as there are seasons to the soil. We sow in one season and reap in another. There are times of sunshine and times of rain; all are necessary. We must wait for the harvest because it is valuable.

So, how do you strengthen your heart spiritually, which really means, how do you keep yourself encouraged and joyful and thankful?

- Make sure your diet is right.

John 6:33: *For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*

- Get involved in the lives of others.
- Get rid of bad habits that are harmful.

In verse 9 James reminds them:

Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Grumbling is making a low rumbling sound. Under your breath. You keep it low but it's there! Who are you grumbling against? What do you grumble about?

If you have any problem with a believer, and you do not go to that believer *first* and try to resolve it, the Judge is at the door!



2. The Prophets

How are we encouraged by the prophets?

- They were in the will of God, yet they suffered.

2 Timothy 3:12: *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

- God cared for the prophets when they went through suffering.
- Many prophets endured trials and sufferings not only at the hands of unbelievers, but at the hands of their fellow "believers."
- The prophets were killed and buried without any notice or recognition in many cases. But today their names are honored. When our Lord comes again, he will bring his reward with him.

Revelation 22:12: *Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.*

3. Job

Then James reminds them of Job and how he persevered.

Matthew 5:10-12: Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We talk about the *patience* of Job. James talks about the *perseverance* of Job.

Patience suggests tolerance or endurance of difficult situations. On the other hand, perseverance suggests determination where an individual strives to achieve his target.

You can be patient even if you don't feel patient!

An impatient Christian is a powerful weapon in the devil's hands.

Hebrews 4:14 – 16: Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

James 5:12 – “Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.”

Job refused to curse the day he was born; he refused to curse God and die. Neither did he try to bargain with God.

See what Jesus had to say about oaths:

Matthew 5:34-37: But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne;³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.³⁷ All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

This refers to the light, casual use of oaths in informal conversation - not formal oaths in such places as courts of law.

James 5:13 – 20

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back,²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

James says we pray:

- When we're in trouble
- When we're happy
- When we're sick

Think of some Bible people who asked God to remove the affliction, but God chose instead to give them grace.

Notice how James connects repentance and healing in verse 16: *Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*

1 Corinthians 11:30: *That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.*

Disobedience to God can lead to sickness. See Psalm 32. David had this experience.

Proverbs 28:13: *Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.*

1 John 5:14-15: *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.*

So, how do we pray for people who are sick, including ourselves?

James points out how powerful the prayer of a righteous person can be. Are you a righteous person?

Philippians 3:9: *...and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.*

Elijah's prayer was a prayer of faith.

1 Kings 18:1: *After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."*

Why? Because God told him he would send rain, so when Elijah prayed, he didn't say, "if it is your will."

Elijah was a righteous man and he prayed earnestly and persistently. Those are good examples for us in our prayer life. We must pray from a heart that is confessed up, harboring no known sin. And we must pray persistently, without giving up.

James 5: 19 - 20

Pray for the wanderers and bring them back. This is referring to a fellow believer. The verb used here means "to wander" and suggests a gradual moving away from the will of God. We might call it backsliding.

A backslidden Christian is dangerous to himself and to other believers because she may influence others to join her.

Hebrews 2:1: *We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.*

Drifting can go undetected for a long time until you realize you are a long way from where you used to be.

When you see a fellow believer wandering from the truth, what should you do?

- Pray, pray, pray.
- Try to bring her back.

It is important we seek to win the lost, but it is also important to win the saved.

Matthew 18:15: *If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.*