

James 5:1-12

Patience in Suffering

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your 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. Look! 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. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

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. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As 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. 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.

James 5:1-12, NIV

We will at some point experience the corruption of others around us. Yet, this should not shake our faith. The God we serve is an eternal God who is drawing all things to Himself. At the end of time itself, it is God who will stand in Judgment over the wicked and the righteous. Until then, we must not fall into the same trap as the wicked in pursuing gain, but remain steadfast and patient waiting on the Lord, speaking with wholeness and integrity. James continues to discuss the connection between faith and works, specifically in the face of the wealth and power that the world offers. Our God is eternal and our strength comes from God whose strength will never run out.

The Rot of Wealth

Wealth, in and of itself, is not inherently bad. Like most things, it is a tool and tools are morally neutral. Yet, the issue with wealth comes in its pursuit above the people around us. We pursue wealth and power as a means of our own self-worth and validation. The issue that James tackles is that of oppression and using the wealth to lord it over people. Throughout history there has often been a synonymous usage of wealth and power, but, for those of the faith, there is a greater purpose being expressed.

- What are some of the issues that James mentions regarding the hearts of the people in verses 1-6? Why are these particularly troublesome?
- What are the dangers in people living for their own wants and desires? How does this affect people spiritually? How does this affect the world around us?
- Where is this a struggle for us personally, in seeking wealth, status, and power above the well-being of others?
- How do we live Kingdom minded in our current culture and context?

Responding to The Wicked's Gain

Many people's blood begins to boil at the thought of a wicked person seeing any form of gain or prosperity. Bad people are expected to experience bad results and good people, good results. There should be no deviation from formula or the action isn't fair. Yet, for God, the issue has never been what is fair but what is best for the people of God. Our response, then isn't to respond to the prosperity of people with vitriol and hate but rather with patience and firmness in words.

- What are the things that James commends the people to do in response in the oppression of people? How does James use the prophets as a means of showing us how we should respond?
- Why does James promote patience over violence or taking judgment into our own hands? What does this say about the God we serve that we can persevere in the face of oppression?
- What are some of the inherent difficulties in speaking out against the oppression of people by the rich and powerful?
- Where do you see this expressed in the world today? What opportunities do you have to express your faith and stand up for the oppressed?

A Caution Against Hypocrisy

If our response to the oppression of the wicked is firmness and strength in speech while being patient for the judgment of the Lord. Our words and our actions must come in alignment with one another. We serve a consistent God who seeks all of us, fully, from our thoughts, to our words, to our actions.

- Why is it vital that our actions and our behaviors match? When there is a separation between the two, what does that communicate to the outside world about the God we serve?
- Where do you struggle the most with taking your spirituality from faith to action? How does God offer the strength and encouragement to live out your faith?

THE BOOK OF JAMES

FATHWORKS

