

The Letter of James - Chapter 5

Worshipping Wealth (James 5:1-12) - *The Bible does not teach that wealth in and of itself is sinful. Wealth can be a blessing from God and provides opportunities to do good. Wealth becomes sinful when we worship it instead of God. If wealth is to be a source of blessing and not condemnation, it must not be uselessly hoarded, unjustly gained, self-indulgently spent, or ruthlessly acquired. What is your view on wealth and faith? How do the two intersect in your life?*

Key Points:

- The faith we possess should be reflected in how we gain, manage, and prioritize the wealth we possess.
- Those who are persecuted and oppressed by the rich and powerful can find refuge and comfort in the Lord.
- Because of our faith in Christ, we should always seek to speak the words of truth.

Key Words:

- ***Oaths***: In verse 12, James encourages believers to avoid the use of oaths and be distinctive in speaking the truth. In the Jewish culture, people would swear by anything beside the name of the Lord. This is not a universal condemnation of oaths. God confirmed a promise with an oath (Hebrews 6:13-18). James is speaking against the careless use of oaths in everyday speech. James's words echo what Jesus says in Matthew 5:34-37 that all of our speech should be as if we were under an oath to tell the truth.

Questions to Consider:

- Does James teach that it is a sin to be wealthy? How do you support your answer.
- How does James counsel his readers to respond in times of trouble? Why?
- Why did James argue that the Jewish custom of swearing oaths was unnecessary and improper in the church?
- Read Isaiah 3:14-15; 10:1-4. What charges did Isaiah bring against the wealthy elders and princes?
- Read 1 Timothy 6:10, 17-19. What do you learn here about a proper view and use of money?

The Prayers of the Righteous (James 5:13-20) - *A strong commitment to prayer is a prerequisite to enduring suffering and affliction. James's exhortation to prayer embraces the prayer life of the entire church. Maintaining open, sharing, and praying relationships with other Christians will help stop believers from bottoming out in their spiritual lives. In short, prayer answers the needs of any and every situation we face in our individual and communal lives.*

Key Points:

- Prayer works in all circumstances.
- Prayer works best within a community of accountability.
- Prayer is the key to keeping our faith alive.

Key Words:

- Prayer: Christian prayer addresses God as Father through and in the name of Jesus Christ and is based on the confidence that God hears God's children. Prayer is drawn partly from the urgency of human needs and partly from the promise and challenge of God's Word. Personal prayer is shaped by the awareness of God's presence. Corporate prayer is the living breath of the church. Through prayer the church resists the assaults of Satan, receives the gifts of grace, seeks deliverance, healing and restoration for the saints, supports evangelization, and hastens the return of the Lord.
- Anointing with Oil: In Bible times, priest were anointed for service. In addition, olive oil was used medicinally as a healing agent. In the text, James could be referring to either of these uses. The anointing could be understood metaphorically as the elders' work in encouraging, comforting, and strengthening the believer.

Questions to Consider:

- What kind of suffering does James refer to in verse 13? Is the context speaking of physical sickness or spiritual weakness? How do you know?
- What do you learn from Elijah's example of faithful praying?
- What does it mean to "wander from the truth"?
- Read Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. According to this parable what is at least one cause of people wandering from the faith?
- What does this parable add to your understanding of James's teaching on the danger of wandering from the truth? What are the consequences?

Consider all we have discussed and covered in the book of James. What core truths stand out to you? How does it affect our individual discipleship? How does it impact our church as a community?