

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Good morning,

This morning we are going to finish the book of James.

Turn with me to James 5.

One of my favorite novel growing up – was John Steinbeck's The Pearl.

If you have never read it, it is about a very poor indigenous pearl diver named Kino living in Baja with his wife and young child.

One day, he is diving for pearls and he comes across a huge oyster, he opens it up and finds a pearl inside of it the size of a seagull's egg.

All of their problems are solved right???

After all – that is what money does right??

The pearl was supposed to make their life easier – it was supposed to take their troubles away – it was supposed to be their ticket out of poverty and out of obscurity.

Instead, the pearl becomes an instrument that only brings agony, division within the family and death to the family.

What was thought to be a blessing at first – turns into a curse by the end of the story.

They lose their son at the end of the story and are forced to throw the pearl back into the ocean as they hold the body of their lifeless son.

What caused the agony???

Greed.

The people who Kino came in contact with after he discovered the pearl – they wanted the pearl for themselves. Instead of offering Kino what the pearl was worth, they would try to cheat him by offering a fraction of what the pearl was worth.

Kino, himself, was full of greed as he becomes paranoid because he kept thinking that everyone was coming for his pearl – instead of letting it go, instead of just selling it – he holds out for more.

In our text this morning, one of the things that James is going to address is the subject of greed. Those that oppress the poor – just like the people that attempted to cheat Kino in the illustration.

However, James is also going to address those on the opposite side of the spectrum. Those who do not have a lot of material things – and he is going to expose the folly of preferring material things over the things that are spiritual.

Let's pray...

[Jas 5:1-20 NKJV] 1 Come now, [you] rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon [you]! 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the **last days. 4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the **Lord of Sabaoth**. 5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.**

As you know, James is writing this letter to the early church in Jerusalem, which mostly consisted of Jewish converts.

Many of those in the early church were persecuted.

Many of them were poor.

And we have already seen James address the issue of rich and poor in his epistle.

In chapter 1, James wrote about the perspective of the rich and poor.

That the rich should glory in their humiliation because their riches are short lived. They are going to wither.

In chapter two, James warned the church not to show favoritism or partiality toward those that are rich.

In those two instances, James addresses the rich in the church –

After all, it is not a sin to be rich.

However, here in chapter five, it appears that James is addressing those that are not saved or those that are simply playing church.

And the reason that I say that is because over and over again in his epistle, every time James gives an instruction to the church, he includes the word brethren. (brother and sister)

For example, in verse 4:11 James says, do not speak evil of one another, brethren.

Later on in our text, in verse 7 we are going to see him use brethren when he speaks specifically to the poor in the church.

So what James is doing here is pronouncing a “woe” or a word of judgment against the rich nonbeliever who has placed his or her trust in their own riches.

And the point that James is trying to make to them is that wealth is temporary and that judgment and eternity are just around the corner.

So as they keep accumulating wealth and hoarding their wealth – it is not going to do them any good as they stand before God.

To pursue wealth, while neglecting the pursuit of God is itself foolish.

James is not condemning the riches of people or those that are rich.

After all, there are many examples of rich people in the bible that God used.

Abraham was rich

Job was rich

Barnabas was rich

James is simply condemning the wrong use of riches and the rich people who use their riches as a weapon against the poor instead of a tool to help the poor.

Turn with me to the book of 1 Timothy 6,

[1Ti 6:6-10, 17-19 NKJV] 6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into [this] world, [and it is] certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 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. 10 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. ... 17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 [Let them] do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to

share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

In verse 6 and 8 we have the word content.

Paul says that we should be content as long as we have food and the clothes on our back –

Think about how hard that is for most of us.

We see a commercial on the TV for a car or a phone or a pair of shoes and our first reaction is – I want. I covet.

The word content is the exact opposite of coveting –

As we covet, we become greedy – we want more and more.

And we will do whatever it takes to get what we want.

That is what these rich unbelievers were doing. They were getting richer at the expense of others.

This is what James is referring to here in verse 4, the laborers would work for these rich people and then the rich people would turn around and not pay them their wages.

The laborers could take them to court but they knew that the rich had more resources and therefore they couldn't afford to continue pursuing the matter.

So they would cry out and the Lord of Sabaoth would hear their cries.

I asked you to make a note of the Lord of Sabaoth – this is not the title Lord of the Sabbath – this is the title Lord of Hosts or Lord of Heaven’s armies.

This is a warning to the rich oppressors, the cries of the people that they had oppressed had come to the ears of the God who commands heavenly armies, the God of might and power and judgment.

In verse 5, James is comparing the rich oppressors to the fattening of a cow before the slaughter.

Their main objective is selfish indulgence – and their lack of compassion toward the poor reflected their godless, selfish focus on life.

Illustration

After Imelda Marcos and her husband Ferdinand were deposed, Newsweek did an article on their life.

Their article stated that when they fled the country, she left behind a closet with 3,000 pairs of shoes and five shelves of unused Gucci handbags, still stuffed with paper and the price tags attached.

She had 500 bras, a trunk full of girdles, huge bottles of perfume, and many containers of Christian Dior wrinkle cream.

She was known to spend \$12 million on jewelry in a single day in Switzerland!

She once told an interviewer, “I am my little people’s star and slave. When I go out into the barrios, I get dressed up because I know the little people want to see a star.”

Church, I realize that luxury is a relative term and it’s easy to judge the extravagant examples and justify ourselves.

We need to examine ourselves prayerfully and often, so that we don’t fall into what James is condemning. I believe that the Lord wants us to live simply and manage our resources in light of His eternal purposes.

So after addressing the rich oppressors, James draws his attention those that are being taken advantage of.

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See [how] the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

The illustration of a farmer reminds us that faith involves trusting God with what you cannot control.

A farmer cannot determine when it will rain and when it will not.

The farmer must prepare the fields for planting, then sow the seeds, then tend the fields. He must then harvest the field and take the fruit to market.

However, throughout the season, he must wait patiently on the Lord.

He was dependent on the early rains that occurred in the fall – these were important because they prepared the soil – the softened the ground for plowing.

The farmer was also dependent on the latter rains – those that occurred in the spring. These rains were essential to the maturing of the crop before the harvest.

So, James says, when it comes to the Lord's coming and the injustice that surrounds you, like a farmer trust God with what you cannot control while honoring God with what you can control.

And one of the ways that we can honor God is to establish our hearts.

"Establish [our] hearts" is an exhortation to go on growing in the Lord.

To be strengthened in Him.

It calls on us to work towards producing mature fruit in our walk.

Our hearts are the field upon which the word was sown, and has taken root.

We're to tend to them, and bring forth fruit, a hundredfold, spurred-on by the imminence of the coming of the Lord.

9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

We must always remember that churches are made-up of flawed human beings saved by God's grace.

We are each on track to becoming perfect, but we are all currently imperfect works in progress as we wait for the coming of the Lord.

It's a formula for problems, so James turns his attention to our being patient with one another as we wait for the coming of the Lord.

Apparently, grumbling was a major problem among the dispersed Messianic Jews James was writing to.

The word he used describes an inner feeling of dissatisfaction and personal irritation with other believers.

It is better translated as groaning.

It arises in our heart especially when we are mistreated.

It's not slandering, or gossiping, or even murmuring.

It's quiet and personal.

But it is against others, and it affects our relationship with them, and it can become open and hostile.

We won't be able to "establish your heart" so long as you have grumbling in it.

The phrase "lest you be condemned" doesn't have anything to do with our eternal destination – remember, James is taking to the church here.

It refers to when the church will stand before Jesus at His reward seat.

So because the coming of the Lord can happen at any time, we should careful not to grumble.

10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end [intended by] the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

Most of God's prophets were badly treated, not by the gentiles, but by their own people.

Just before he was stoned to death for preaching Jesus to the Jews, Stephen said to his persecutors, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the [Messiah]..." (Acts 7:52).

It's sad to say this, but you ought to expect to be mistreated by other believers.

Remember, there's no perfect church.

We see that the prophets are an example of suffering, but what about "patience?"

The kind of "patience" James has in mind is what we would call perseverance.

It is enduring suffering til the end, without quitting.

James uses the example of Job.

Now, if you have ever read the book of Job.

You know that Job was a grumbler.

Even though he grumbled – he persevered.

Because when we get to the end of the book of Job -, he has not only had his fortunes, health, and family restored, but he's grown closer to God.

(Job 42:5 NKJV) "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You."

Job has learned that God indeed is very compassionate and merciful.

By seeing the "end" of the lives of Bible characters, like Job, we get an idea of the "end" God intends for our lives.

And we are reminded that grumbling is counterproductive.

We may not understand the difficulty you are going through, but beloved in the end, when we get to heaven, we will be able to look back and see that God was indeed compassionate and merciful.

12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and [your] "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.

One thing that most of us do in our households is try to teach our children to tell the truth all of the time; even in the little things.

So, a child (or perhaps an adult) from time to time may say something like, "I pinky swear." Or, "Cross my heart and hope to die." Or, "I swear on my mother's grave," in order to show they are really telling the truth.

Of course, there is no meaning behind if we are secretly crossing our fingers behind our back.

What James is teaching the church is that – you really don't need to resort to oaths? If you say something do it.

Be a person of integrity.

If we say that we are a Christian, we must live our lives as a Christian.

Our words speak to our integrity.

Our yes must be yes.

Our no must be no.

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.

The particular word he used for "suffering" means trouble of any kind - physical, financial, spiritual, etc.

At the other end of the spectrum are times when you are "cheerful." He's going for the idea that you're in a time of spiritual blessing and abounding.

Now at both ends, and everywhere in-between, you should involve the Lord.

1. He is there with you in your suffering, so talk to Him in prayer.

2. He is there in your times of blessing, so sing to Him.

Suffering can cause us to doubt God and His goodness, which then hinders our prayers.

We must respond in prayer.

Times of blessing (cheerful) are super-dangerous.

They are the breeding ground for spiritual complacency or, worse, spiritual pride.

Rejoicing (singing psalms) in the Lord acknowledges that your abundance is all from His hand; that every good and perfect gift is from above.

14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, **anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the **prayer of faith will save the sick**, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.**

To the Jews, the anointing with olive oil served several purposes.

- Medicinally – The Good Samaritan poured oil into the wounds of the man that was robbed and beaten.
- Personal Hygiene – When Ruth was to see Boaz, she was told, “Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor.
- Anointing of the Holy Spirit – we have Samuel anointing David – it was supposed to be a representation of the Holy Spirit coming upon those men.

It is not oil or the elders of the church that heal people’s sickness, but it is God who heals because His people ask for His healing power through the release of faith in prayers.

The reason that the sick person is going to need a great deal of spiritual support and

counsel about sickness, and they need to get it from mature men of God who have a strong theology of suffering.

16 Confess [your] trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

The “confessing” that James wrote about is done among the saints. He was not suggesting confessing our sins to a preacher or priest.

We confess our sins first of all to the Lord (1 John 1:9), but we must also confess them to those who have been affected by them.

I asked you to make a note of the word fervent.

Our prayers must be fervent not because we will be able to convince God to answer our prayers.

We pray fervent prayers so that we gain God’s heart by being fervent for the things He is fervent for.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

Elijah is a model of earnest prayer that was answered by God. His effectiveness in prayer extended even to the weather! Yet this shows that Elijah’s heart was in tune

with God's. He prayed for the rain to stop and start only because he sensed it was in the heart of God in His dealings with Israel.

19 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

In verse 19, we have someone who has wandered from the truth. Someone who has started to drift back into the world.

Remember, James is addressing the church – he says “among you”

What should our response be?

The first thing that we must do is pray –

Pray that the Lord may soften their heart and reopen their eyes.

One of the hardest prayers that anyone of us can pray is for God to do whatever it takes to turn someone who has wandered off around.

Whatever it takes – means them hitting rock bottom, just like the prodigal son.

We are talking about a person eternal destination – we should be moved.

We need to engage with them.

Confront them – many times we just simply choose to forget them or look away.

We need to love them - If we are going to help an erring brother, we must have an attitude of love, for “love shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). Both James and Peter learned this principle from Proverbs 10:12—“Hatred stirs up strife: but love covers all sins.”

This does not mean that love “sweeps the dirt under the carpet.” Where there is love, there must also be truth (“speaking the truth in love,” said Paul in Eph. 4:15), and where there is truth, there is honest confession of sin and cleansing from God. Love not only helps the offender to face his sins and deal with them, but love also assures the offender that those sins, once forgiven, are remembered no more.

We need to restore them when they return.

James concludes with this because this is exactly what he has endeavored to do through this challenging letter – to confront those who have wandered from a living faith, endeavoring to save their souls from death, by demanding that they not only hear the word, but do it, because a living faith will have its proof.

Amen.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

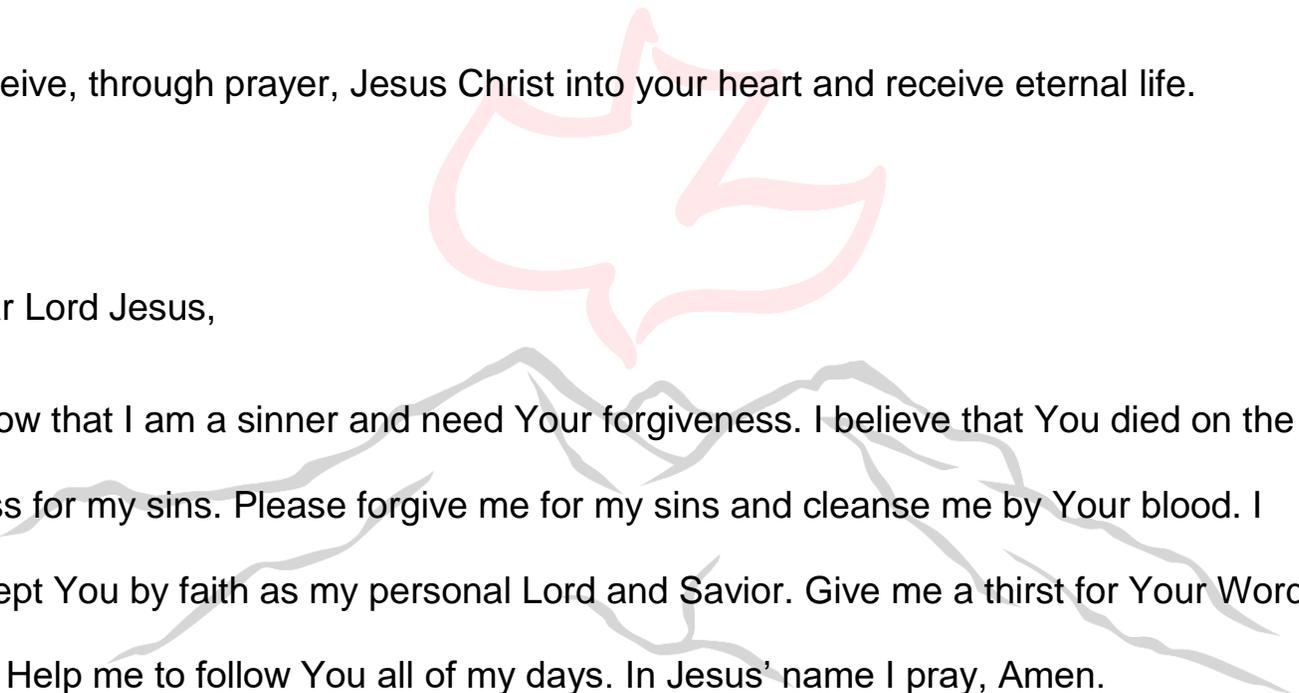
Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



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