

## James 5:1-12 ENCORE The heart of patience

- 1) In verses 1-6 James makes some rather scathing comments to the rich.
  - a) Is wealth evil (1 Timothy 6:10)?
  - b) Is it a sin to accumulate wealth?
  - c) Is it sinful to have nice things (v.5)?
  - d) What does this passage condemn?
  - e) What do you think are some indications that a Christian does not have a proper Biblical attitude toward material things?
- 2) In the chapter 4, James had some strong words of rebuke for those who had allowed the pursuit of riches to detour them from seeking God's will (James 4:13-17).
  - a) Give three characteristics of the group James now addresses (v.1-6)
  - b) Are the "rich" in this passage Christians?
  - c) Read James 2:6-7 how do these verse describe "the rich"?
- 3) In Biblical times wealth consisted of money and such commodities as grain, corn, oil, and garments. These rich landowners had accumulated an abundance of these material possessions. However, in the process, they had failed to realize that they were accumulating some negative things as well.
  - a) If individuals gain financial wealth by ungodly means, what are they accumulating or storing up in addition to their material possessions (v.1-4)?
  - b) Perhaps these Jews believed God was endorsing their lives because they were experiencing financial advancement. It might have seemed natural for them to believe their financial increase was an evidence of God's endorsement (Dt. 28:1-14). Has there been a time in your life (past or present) when you knew you were violating God's Word in a particular area of your life but seemed to be receiving God's blessing?
- 4) The phrase **Lord of Sabaoth** (v. 4) is an important Hebrew expression which means Lord of Hosts or Lord of Armies. Originally, it meant the Lord God would lead His people in victory against their foes. Later in the Old Testament, it came to mean that God was the leader of the angelic host or armies. With this in mind, what does the particular use of this phrase teach (v. 4)?
- 5) The recipients of this letter were probably mostly poor people. How would an understanding of God's sovereignty and justice help them endure hardship with patience?
- 6) James gives three examples of patience to encourage believers to be triumphant in trial until the coming of the Lord (v.7).
  - a) Who are the three examples of patience (vv. 7-11)?
  - b) James commands the believers to do four things in order to be triumphant in trial. What are they (vv. 7-11)?
- 7) People all respond to trials in different ways.
  - a) How do you tend to respond to trials?
  - b) Is it ok to grumble & complain (v.9)?
  - c) How does God want you to respond to trials?
- 8) Is it sinful for Christians to take an oath of any kind?
- 9) Are off-hand oaths sinful, like: "No, really!" or "Cross my heart!" or "I swear to you" or "I swear to God!" or "I'm not kidding—trust me!" or "If I don't keep my word then you can ..."?
- 10) Which do you have to watch out for most in your own life: acquiring riches ruthlessly or unjustly, hoarding money uselessly, or spending wealth self-indulgently? What needs to change immediately in your view of wealth and in your handling of it?

### **James 5:13-20 Pray, sing, confess**

**Monday v.13** Is prayer important to you? This last passage of James is all about the importance and power of prayer. Is prayer a part of your every day routine? Do you have a place where you go every day to be alone with God? Do you pray with your spouse, your children and/or grandchildren if you have them? How about your every day decisions; do you pray about them? Do you have a prayerful attitude? What I mean by that is; do you go through your day thinking about God? Do you make decisions based on the will of God, and do you ask Him for direction in all that you do?

**Tuesday v.13** Think about this: If you are a parent, you deeply love your child and you want only what is best for him. What if when your child becomes a teen-ager he or she withdraws from you? When he gets home from school or work he goes straight to his room and locks the door. He gets his own dinner; he seems to do everything he can to avoid talking to you. You as a loving parent you long to be involved in his life, to give him wisdom, to listen to his hopes, dreams, and fears. You want to be there in his pain, to rejoice with him during good times, yet he avoids you like the plague. He seems to go about his day as if you don't even exist. He never even stops to acknowledge the fact that he lives under your roof, or that you provide the food he eats. Maybe your child is hurting and has withdrawn from you because he blames you for his circumstance. Maybe he believes that you could not possibly understand his situation. Maybe he is just trying to get through this life on his own, to make his own way, he doesn't need you anymore. All you want is to be a part of his life, and to wrap loving arms around him, to give him every good thing, but he won't even talk to you. Maybe that child is just a self-centered unthankful brat. Let me ask you a question; what is your prayer life like?

**Wednesday v. 14-15** Amy Carmichael was a missionary to India. One of her beloved coworkers, a woman named Ponnammal, contracted cancer in 1913. Amy was aware of this verse in James so they called for the elders, they anointed Ponnammal, and they laid a palm branch across her bed as a sign of victory. They accepted whatever answer God might give, certain that whether it was to be physical healing or not, He would give victory and peace. It sounds like a simple formula. It was an act of faith, but certainly accompanied by the anguish of doubt and desire which had to be brought again and again under the authority of Jesus. . . . From that very day Ponnammal grew worse. The pain increased, and her eyes grew dull as she lingered for days in misery until she reached her limit and her "warfare was accomplished." She died. What happened? Not enough faith? They didn't follow the mystical healing plan just right? Read the following verses (2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Philippians 2:27; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20) I dare say that Amy Carmichael had as much faith as any of us yet her beloved Ponnammal died.

I would go even further to venture that none of us attain to the level faith of the apostle Paul, yet he himself had a thorn in the flesh, and on at least three occasions he could not heal dear friends of his. Why? You see the question is never whether God is able to heal or not, it is always whether it is His will or not. The questions is also whether we are truly seeking His will, or just wanting healing regardless of His will.

**Thursday (James 5:16)** So many hearts, hopes, and homes are broken by sin. This brokenness infects our culture and invades our lives. God has provided both a deterrent to sin and a means of forgiveness for its guilt: honest and genuine confession of our sin. At the heart of confession is a passion to see sin for what it is in the eyes of God and to be anguished for our participation in it. No wonder confession is so healing (1 John 1:5-2:2). No wonder God wants us to confess our sin to each other and then come to him for each other's healing from sin and its damage. No wonder God grants such power to the prayer of a righteous person interceding for one led to confess. Let's confess our sin and leave it behind.

**Friday (James 5:16)** As an encouragement cheerfully to offer intercessory prayer, remember that such prayer is the sweetest God ever hears, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which our Great High Priest now puts into the golden censer, there is not a single grain for Himself. His intercession must be the most acceptable of all supplications--and the more like our prayer is to Christ's, the sweeter it will be; thus while petitions for ourselves will be accepted, our pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, more faith, more brotherly kindness, will be, through the precious merits of Jesus, the sweetest oblation that we can offer to God, the very fat of our sacrifice. Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent. What wonders it has wrought! The Word of God teems with its marvellous deeds. Believer, thou hast a mighty engine in thy hand, use it well, use it constantly, use it with faith, and thou shalt surely be a benefactor to thy brethren. When thou hast the King's ear, speak to Him for the suffering members of His body. When thou art favoured to draw very near to His throne, and the King saith to thee, "Ask, and I will give thee what thou wilt," let thy petitions be, not for thyself alone, but for the many who need His aid. If thou hast grace at all, and art not an intercessor, that grace must be small as a grain of mustard seed. Thou hast just enough grace to float thy soul clear from the quicksand, but thou hast no deep floods of grace, or else thou wouldst carry in thy joyous bark a weighty cargo of the wants of others, and thou wouldst bring back from thy Lord, for them, rich blessings which but for thee they might not have obtained:--  
Charles Spurgeon

**Saturday v.17-20** Elijah the prophet was no more than a man with a nature just like ours. He was not some super-creature that God created specially, somehow higher than man. No he was a man just like us. Elijah was special because he had faith in the living God, and he lived that faith. He was obedient to God, he believed God, and God answered his prayer. James is telling us to remember all those awesome stories of answered prayer from the Old Testament. Remember all those incredible miracles you read about, those were just ordinary men, and women. They were men and women just like you and I. God answered Elijah's prayer and held back the very rain for three years. That should be an awesome challenge to us to commit to serious prayer. God has chosen to work through our prayers.