

JAMES: HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING
W5 - "A Disciple is a Prayer" - James Chapter 5 - 05.10.2026
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Point 1: RESPONSE TO WEALTH

James has spoken about wealth rather extensively thus far.

James 1:9-11 *Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.*

Pursuits in the greek means to journey, go out, or travel. The Rich will fade away in their *pursuits*. They will fade away in their desire for more.

Furthermore, we can rightly assume there has been abuse of wealth in the Church James is writing to. James shares in chapter 2:

James 2:15-16 *If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?*

When a disciple obtains wealth, generosity typically follows. Luke documents the immediate response of new converts in Acts 2:45:

Acts 2:45 *And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.*

Immediately, Christ was gain and their earthly possessions were used strictly for the betterment of the Kingdom.

And further in James 4, there seems to be a desire for riches:

James 4:2-3 *You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*

Therefore, an argument could rightly be made that the Church of the dispersed tribes has abused wealth and even treated wealth as an idol. Generosity is seemingly non-existent among this specific gathering of disciples.

The purpose of these scriptures: **whatever you hold with your heart, holds your entire being.**

With this knowledge, James gives two warnings to the wealthy in this first section: wealth's ultimate demise and the result of their poor stewardship.

I. Wealth's ultimate demise

James 5:1 *“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.”*

The issue with their wealth is it has become their desire. It has become their god. It grasps their heart. Therefore, *weep and howl for the miseries coming upon you*. The miseries are the ultimate day of judgment.

Therefore, the question becomes, what has your heart?

James 5:2 *“Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten.”*

One day, everything the rich treated as provider will be burned.

But the only one that will last is Jehovah Jireh who they neglected as provider because of their selfish ambition.

What you take with you is in the heart. So who is Lord of your heart? Money, or Christ?

The psalmist wrote:

Psalm 62:10 *“Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery; **if riches increase, set not your heart on them.**”*

The **possession of wealth is not an issue, however, when wealth possesses you** is where the issue arises.

- Is money constantly on your heart and mind?
- Is money your drive? Your inspiration?
- Has wealth corrupted your character?
- Or has it been used as a great tool to increase the Kingdom of God?

The Christian understands that nothing is theirs, rather they are stewards of what God has blessed them with. This causes Christians to be incredibly more generous than non-Christians. Warren Wiersbe wrote: “You and I may *possess* many things, but we do not *own* them. God is the Owner of everything, and we are His stewards.”

Wealth, however, does a funny thing.

- It turns the humble into the prideful.

- Makes the Godly ambition turn into selfish-ambition.
- The moment someone gets wealth, they become more reliant on their own abilities. That is the precise reason James tells them in ch.1 to boast in their humility.
- Wealth is a mere tool that can be used for self-indulgence or Kingdom building.

James 5:3 *“Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.”*

James is drawing from the Lord’s words in Matthew 6:

Matthew 6:19-20 *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

In the context of James: the rich have stored up wealth to give them the delusion that they are indeed rich. However, as we will see here in the next verse, they owe money to their workers in which they have neglected in paying.

- We too can give ourselves the delusion of wealth, but have yet to do the Biblical commands and principles of **tithing** and **generosity**.

Jesus continues:

Matthew 6:21 *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Where is your treasure?

- Is your treasure in a bank? Or is your treasure in the Kingdom?
- Are you only spending on yourself, and indulging in pleasures of the flesh and the world? OR, are you generous?
- Do you give to Churches and charities to help the less fortunate people across the world? Or do you only spend on yourself?

Where is your treasure? Treasure in Christ RESULTS in generosity.

II. Poor stewardship

James 5:4 *“Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are **crying** out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.”*

Those who worked the fields for a promised wage, were never given what was owed to them. This gave the delusion of wealth to the rich landholders. Which gives us the context of v. 3 *You have laid up treasure in the last days.*

Because of their injustice, the cries of the laborers will be the very testimony against them.

Furthermore, the workers during this time of suffering did what...they prayed. They cried out to God. They did not turn toward anger (**1:19**), they did not turn to slander (**ch. 3**), they did not seek to overthrow—they cried out to the Judge.

James 5:5 *“You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.”*

Money has become their god, and has been a very building block of separation between them and God. It is the love of money that is the root of all evil.

Because of their self-indulgence—feeding themselves all their passions and desires—they are ready for the day of slaughter, which is the day of judgement. On that day of judgement, the tears of the laborers, and the rotting and extinguishing of their wealth will testify against them.

James 5:6 *“You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.”*

The rich are not only stingy and worshipping their money, but they are also murdering those who are labeled as righteous. Who are the righteous—the disciples.

Notice, he doesn't say not to be rich, rather treat wealth as it is meant to be treated—a tool, not an idol.

Point 2: RESPONSE TO SUFFERING

James is coming down to the end of his letter to the dispersed believers, and he shares a reminder.

First show joy, now be patient. He shares three examples of patience: The farmer, the prophets, and Job.

I. The Farmer

James 5:7a *Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.*

Patience in the greek (makrothymeō) means to defer your anger. This is drawing from the beginning of the letter when James instructed the disciples to *be slow to anger (v. 1:19)*.

***James 5:7b** See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.*

After **long-suffering**, the earth brings forth a harvest. “...*Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God,*” (**Acts 14:22**).

Farmers plant in a season, wait in a season, and harvest in a season. Believers receive the implanted word with meekness in a season (James 1:21), go through a drought (a wilderness), and then go through a season of great spiritual growth (on fire for God). This is a repeated cycle.

***James 5:8** You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

Paul says to Titus:

***Titus 2:13** waiting for our **blessed hope**, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*

The greek word for hope (elpis) actually means expectation. We are to patiently wait the expected coming of the Lord. I think this draws from last week, do we really believe this is going to happen?

Therefore, be slow to anger in this time of persecution, cry out to God, do not judge, and patiently wait the **expectation** of the Lord’s arrival.

James is saying to the disciples “I know you are going through a lot, but remember, we will be with Jesus. Be patient for His coming.”

The purpose of this passage I believe has been summed up greatly by Matthew Henry: “Consider him that waits for a crop of corn; and will not you wait for a crown of glory?”

***James 5:9** Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.*

Because of the difficult times the disciples are going through, a common reaction may be to grumble, to speak evil (**v. 4:11**), to be quick to speak (**v. 1:19**), to be impartial (**v. 2:1-12**), to judge.

James is further REMINDING the disciples to live in peace with one another...A Disciple is a Peacemaker not a warmonger.

II. The Prophets

James 5:10 *As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.*

The prophets, though aligned with the will of God and preaching in the name of the Lord, underwent persecution of many kinds.

Warren Wiersbe writes “Satan tells the faithful Christian that his suffering is the result of sin or unfaithfulness; and yet his suffering might well be because of faithfulness!” SOMETIMES, if you are receiving pushback, you may be going the right direction.

- If the world hates us, we’re in a good spot.

Wiersbe continues, “Why is it that those who ‘speak in the name of the Lord’ often must endure difficult trials? It is so that their lives might back up their messages?” This back to week one, we never know a true Christian until he is put into a real world situation. *Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.*

III. Job

James 5:11 *Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

I am sure many of us may be familiar of the story of Job, and many of us may be confused.

- “Wait, God allowed this to happen?”
- “Wait he was righteous and lost everything?”

Job went through tremendous hardship. On top of that, his wife was telling him to abandon God, and his friends were throwing blanket accusations on him that he was a sinner. Job, though not understanding God’s will, never cursed God.

A righteous man was tested, and when he endured, he received what he had and more. He did not understand, but He knew the character of God. Wiersbe writes, “When you find yourself in the fire, remember that God keeps His gracious hand on the thermostat!”

- The Lord met Shadrack, Meshack, and Abendago on the outside of the furnace? No, right in the midst of it.

- Jesus was right INSIDE the boat, IN the middle of the storm, with the disciples (**Matthew 8:23-27**).

Suffering brings forth sanctification. Therefore be patient.

James 5:12 *But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.*

James draws from our Lord’s words in Matthew 5:34-37.

Matthew 5:34-37 *“But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.”*

Both these passages of scripture are essentially saying let your character speak for you. Someone who responds with “I swear I’ll get this done,” is someone who has likely not come through in the past. Therefore, when asked to get it done, a simple yes is enough.

The Life Application commentary wrote: “Jesus’ followers ought to be so well known for their honesty and truthfulness that they do not need to make vows.”

This goes with the broader context of the letter—Faith without works is dead. Let your character through suffering be your voice.

Point 3: FIRST PRAY, FINALLY PRAY, FOREVER PRAY

Prayer is central to the Christian faith, but not only the faith. We are instructed to always be praying. Paul states:

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *pray without ceasing*

Jude states:

Jude 20 *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,”*

Jesus gives us an outline of prayer in Matthew 6:

Matthew 6:9-13 *“Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”*

With these handful of examples, we see the centrality of prayer in the Christian's individual and corporate life.

To seal his letter, he closes with this core component, not because it's least important but because it's most important. Through a plethora of instruction, rebuke, and direction, he now gives them an action step, Let's go pray!

James mentions 4 specific things to pray about in this section: Pray for the Suffering, Pray for the Sick, Pray for the Nation, and Pray for the backslidden.

I. Pray for the Suffering

James 5:13a *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.*

The vast majority of Jewish believers are suffering. In the context of this passage, they are the laborers who have not been paid and the righteous who have been murdered. In the broader context of this letter:

James 2:6-7 *...Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court. Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?*

Not only are they being prevented from working for a wage, but they are also being persecuted for the name of Christ. James advice to the disciples of Christ comes at the conclusion of this letter...pray.

Suffering does one of two things:

- Draws us to the Lord
- OR It causes us to curse God and swear an oath to the world.

James 5:13b *Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.*

This doesn't mean we do not sing in suffering nor pray in success. Rather Wiersbe writes "The mature Christian knows how to sing while he is suffering."

Because...

James 1:2 *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds*

And Paul from a jail cell writes:

Philippians 4:4 *Rejoice in the Lord **always**; again I will say, rejoice.*

During suffering pray.

II. Pray for the Sick

James 5:14 *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.*

The elders were instructed to anoint the person with oil IN THE NAME of Jesus! Only one person receives the praise for healing, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. The elders were merely ministering the healing.

James 5:15a *And the prayer of faith*

James 1:6 *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting.*

If we recall from week one, the word faith in the greek (pistis) means “leaning of the ENTIRE human personality upon God or the Messiah in absolute trust and confidence in his **power, wisdom and goodness.**”

Therefore the prayer of faith...

James 5:15b *will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.*

Understand this, it is the prayer of faith that heals the believer. It is praying in accordance to the will of God and that prayer has power.

James 5:15c-16 *And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that **you may be healed.** The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

The phrase *you may be healed* in the greek (iaomai) means heal or cure. It was a word used generally for physical disease and—occasionally—spiritual disease. But there appears to be a tad bit of a prerequisite, *confess yours sins to one another.*

The example of sickness here alludes to the fact that sin can cause sickness. Paul addresses this with the Corinthian Church. The believers in Corinth were abusing the Lord's supper and Paul states:

1 Corinthians 11:30 *“That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.”*

The abuse of the most holy meal—if not the most holy sacrament to our faith—and it has caused many to be weak, ill and die. In this context: the rich believers were gluttonous over the Lord's supper, and were getting drunk off of the wine.

Their sin against God brought sickness. In Acts 5:1-11, we are told of a husband and wife—Ananias and Sapphira—who sold their property and gave only a part of it to the apostles, yet they lied as if they gave them everything. Luke documents what transpired:

Acts 5:3-5 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?...You have not lied to man but to God. When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last..."

There is consequence to our sin. *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.*

It is great to receive external healing, BUT if you receive external **healing** and never receive internal **awakening**, you have lost your life. In Luke 17:11-19, 10 lepers received healing, but only one came back to Jesus.

Jesus is the true prize. Jesus is where healing begins.

III. Pray for the Nation

James 5:17a Elijah was a man with nature like ours,

I think it is no coincidence that James chose Elijah, because Elijah underwent immense suffering. Following the drought, Elijah proved God was Lord and the people turned their hearts back to Him. Jezebel then essentially put a bounty on his head. Therefore, *As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord (James 5:10).* While illustrating powerful prayer, he is also illustrating a man who suffered for God.

Not only did Elijah have to wait three years for the earth to be consumed with rain, but following the great power of God being displayed and the earth bringing forth rain, he had to flee back to the wilderness.

James 5:17-18 Elijah was a man with nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

In **1 Kings 17-19**, Elijah interceded for his nation.

- A nation that was backslidden and actively in pursuit of other gods.

- A nation that was friends with the world.

It doesn't take a great prophet or evangelist because Elijah *was a man with a nature like ours*.

But, what made Elijah different? *He prayed fervently*. Fervently in the greek means prayer. What this scripture is literally saying is, he prayed in prayer. Meaning, he's not saying half-hearted memorized prayers, rather he's going to battle and his whole HEART is crying out to the Lord.

Elijah prayed in prayer. He prayed fervently. He prayed desperately. He prayed without ceasing. Not because He was a prophet, but because he was a man with nature like ours and therefore called out to God so the Lord's will may be done on this earth.

He prayed for his nation.

IV. Pray for the backslidden

James 5:19a *My brothers, if anyone among you wander from the truth*

Those who have wandered from the truth are also discussed elsewhere in the scripture:

1 Timothy 6:10 *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. It is through this craving that some have **wandered** away from the faith.*

The Galatians too struggled with this:

Galatians 1:6 *I am astonished that you are so quickly **deserting** him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel*

What are we supposed to do with the backslidden believer? GO AFTER Him. Jesus left the 99 for the 1, we too are to leave the congregation to get that 1 wanderer.

James 5:19b-20 *and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*

A backslidden person is not someone who made a one time decision, rather it is a gradual process. They decided to skip one Sunday. That slowly becomes the norm, and then eventually, in a couple of years, they never return.

Book of Hebrews states:

Hebrews 2:1 *“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.”*

We must be diligent in the study of the Word and in prayer in order to remain in Christ. The moment you stop reading, stop gathering, stop praying—the further you feel from God. And when someone feels distant from God, it’s not their fault, but it’s Gods and therefore they *wander from the truth*.

I can think of many who have gradually fallen away just in the last year—we are to go after them.

We help those backslidden to get back on track. Not to bring them back to the congregation and judge them, rather bring them back to repentance and right standing with God.

Prayer is central to the believers life. First pray, then pray, Finally...pray.

ACTION STEPS:

- If you have not finished reading the Book of James, I encourage you to finish this book this week. And when you are done there, I suggest reading the Book of Ephesians to further understand the Christian life.
- What are you pursuing in your life? Has money became the main desire in your heart? Whatever holds your heart, holds your entire being. If money is your Lord, repent today.
- Are you going through any sort of suffering today, be patient. CRY OUT TO GOD during this time of suffering, and seek His face.
- Develop a prayer life that is not weak, but is one that is fervent. Study Elijah’s prayer life and then imitate. Pray fervently for the nation, for the suffering, for the sick, for the backslidden.
- Finally, who is backslidden. I just want to give you a moment. Who is someone that used to sit next to you in these seats. I want you to reach out to them right now. Do not wait. Reach out to the backslidden so you may save their souls.