

JAMES 5

In these last days, before the coming of the Lord, what does God want in our lives?

Priorities (1–6). To live only to get wealth is to rob yourself of true riches (1 Tim. 6:6–10, 17–19). It is to worry instead of worship (Matt. 6:19–34). God knows you have needs, and He will meet them if you practice Matthew 6:33.

Patience (7–12). If you have sown the right seed, you will eventually reap a harvest of blessing, so be patient. If others have exploited you, be patient; the Judge is at the door. If you are going through trials, be patient; God is still on the throne.

Prayer (13–18). Many kinds of prayer are named here: prayer for the sick, prayer for forgiveness, prayer for the nation, even prayer about the weather. There is no need that prayer cannot meet and no problem that prayer cannot solve.

Personal concern (19–20). Once again, James emphasizes ministry to individuals (1:27; 2:1–4, 14–16). Can you detect when a fellow believer starts to stray? Are you truly concerned? Will you try to help? Will you wait too long?

1 PETER 1

Salvation is a calling (1–2, 15). We are chosen by the Father, who gives us the new birth (v. 3). We are set apart by the Spirit, who gave the Word and enables God’s servants to declare it (vv. 10–12), and gives sinners the faith to believe the promise (v. 22). We have been purchased by the blood of God’s Son (vv. 18–21), who died for us, rose again, and is coming for us to give us our inheritance (vv. 3–4, 13). No wonder Peter opened his letter with a song of praise! (See Eph. 1:3–14.)

Salvation is a birth (3, 23). This is the spiritual birth Jesus tried to explain to Nicodemus (John 3). When you put your *faith* in Jesus Christ (vv. 5, 7, 9, 21), you are born from above. You receive *hope* (vv. 3–4, 13, 21) and *love* for Christ (v. 8) and His people (v. 22). Because we are God’s children, we want to obey Him (vv. 14–16).

Salvation is a redemption (17–21). The apostle is referring to the Passover Feast (Exod. 12). Jesus is the Lamb slain for us, and His blood was sprinkled to shelter us (v. 2). The Jews in Egypt had to be ready to depart, and we must have the same attitude (v. 13). When Jesus comes again, we will make our exodus from this world!

And all of this was “for you” (vv. 4, 10, 12, 13, 20, 25). Are you praising Him?

1 PETER 2

Growing (1–3). Just as a baby has an appetite for the mother’s milk, so the child of God has an appetite for the Father’s Word. If you lose that appetite and stop growing, check to see if any of the sins listed in verse 1 are infecting your life.

Building (4–8). God is building a temple out of living stones (Eph. 2:19–22), and we are privileged to be part of it. We are built on Jesus Christ, so there is no way the temple can be destroyed.

Sacrificing (9–10). Each believer is a priest before God and can bring sacrifices to the Lord through Jesus Christ. As we worship the Lord, we proclaim His virtues to a lost world. That is what God called Israel to do (Exod. 19:1–9), and they failed. Are we also failing?

Abstaining (11–12). As strangers whose citizenship is in heaven, we are carefully watched by the world; and we must live to glorify God. It may be difficult today, but it will be worth it when Jesus returns.

Submitting (13–25). Peter’s counsel is that Christians be good citizens and employees so that God will be glorified. (See Jeremiah’s advice to the captives [Jer. 29].) The example for us to follow is Jesus Christ who submitted even to death.

1 PETER 3

Peter compared believers to sheep (2:25), and sheep are gentle animals. He then called for Christians to practice gentleness in several areas of life.

In the home (1–7). Christian wives with unsaved husbands should seek to win them to the Lord with true spiritual beauty and not with artificial glamour or nagging. External glamour may fade, but a meek and quiet spirit is incorruptible. Husbands should live as though their wives were priceless porcelain vases and treat them with gentle love.

In the church (8–12). Imagine having to remind Christians to show one another love and courtesy! But as James 4 shows, not every local assembly is a place of peace.

In the world (13–22). Anybody can suffer for doing wrong, but Christians must learn to suffer for doing what is right. Of course, Jesus is the example for us to follow (v. 18; 2:18–25). We witness not by making noise and fighting back but by showing meekness and fear (v. 15). A gentle witness can make a big difference in a violent world.

1 PETER 4

Do not be controlled by the past (1–6). People who have been born again through faith in Christ (1:23) should not allow the old life to control them. The past has been buried, and they are new creatures in Christ. Furthermore, life is too short to waste it on godless living, especially when you realize that one day we will all stand before God.

Be serious about the present (7–11). No matter how difficult life may be, there is a job to do; and we must be faithful. Take time to pray. Show love to the saints. Use your gifts and talents to serve others. The Lord who gave you the ability will also give you the strength to use it for His glory.

Be prepared for the future (12–19). A “fiery trial” was about to come to the church. Peter told his readers to expect it, use it as an opportunity to witness for Christ, and in all things seek to

glorify God. The trial came under the Roman emperor Nero who accused the Christians of burning Rome. The church today faces persecution. Are you prepared?

1 PETER 5

Even apart from the end-times suffering that the church will experience, believers must face their three great enemies.

The world (1–4). Christian leaders are tempted to act like the world and “lord it over” God’s people (Matt. 20:20–28). But leaders are shepherds, and sheep must be *led*, not *driven*. Our service must be willing and humble; we must be eager to help others.

The flesh (5–7). By nature, we do not want to submit to others. The phrase “clothed with humility” reminds us of our Savior when He wore a towel and washed Peter’s feet (John 13:1–11). If we are submitted to the Lord, we will submit to His people. Humility leads to honor; pride leads to shame.

The devil (8–14). The devil is an adversary, not a friend; he is a roaring lion, not a playful pet. He wants to devour you, and you had better be on guard. Peter thought he was well able to defeat the enemy, so he did not heed the Lord’s warning (Luke 22:31–34). The results were failure and shame. You can resist Satan by faith if you are wearing the armor and trusting the Spirit (Eph. 6:10–20).

2 PETER 1

Power for the present (1–11). When you trusted Christ, He gave you all that you need for life and godliness. All you have to do is to appropriate what you need from His resources. His Word feeds the divine nature within, and you can grow in knowledge and in grace. This is not automatic; you must be diligent to use the means of grace that God has provided.

Assurance from the past (12–18). Peter would be martyred soon (John 21:18), so he took occasion to remind his readers that they could trust the Word of God. Although Peter’s experience on the Mount of Transfiguration was wonderful (Matt. 17:1–13), experiences are not a substitute for the unchanging Word of God.

Hope for the future (19–21). The Word is a light in this dark world, pointing to the return of the Lord. “Private interpretation” means that no prophecy should be isolated from the rest of Scripture or interpreted apart from the leading of the Spirit who gave it to us. The Spirit wrote one Book, and it must be understood as a whole. Believers may differ on individual matters of prophecy, but they all agree on the “one hope” (Eph. 4:4)—Jesus is coming again!