

Wednesday Evenings—Sermon Series:
July—August 2023: “**Personal Problems and the Practice of Pure Religion.**”

The letter of James spoke to the **problems** that confronted the disciples of our Lord early in the first century of the Christian era.

While circumstances may change, human needs do not change. Basically, our problems today are the same as they were then.

Remember, the theme of our series and study of James is “**Personal Problems and the Practice of Pure Religion.**”

Part One:

Title: “**The Problem of Temptation**”

Scripture Reading: **James 1:1 – 18**

Text: “*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience*” (**James 1:2 – 3**).

Part Two:

“**The Problem of Living What You Learn**”

Scripture Reading: **James 1:19 – 27**

Text: **James 1:22 (KJV)**

²²But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Conclusion: What did we learn from that passage/sermon last week?

Quite simply stated, we learned that...“**Being**” comes before “**doing**.”

If you are what you ought to *be* in Christ, you will *do* what you ought to do for Christ. In other words, “**Live what you have learned.**”

Then...

Part Three:

Title: “**The Problem of Snobbery**”

Scripture Reading: **James 2:1 – 13**

Text: **James 2:1 (KJV)**

¹My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

Part Four:

Title: “**The Problem of Practicing What You Profess**”

Scripture Reading: **James 2:14 – 26**

Text Verse: **James 2:14 (KJV)**

¹⁴What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

Part Five:

Title: “**The Problem of the Tongue**”

Scripture Reading: **James 3:1 – 12**

Text: “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (**James 3:10**).

Part Six:

Title: “**The Problem of Determining Wisdom**”

Scripture Reading: **James 3:13 – 18**

Text: “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom” (**James 3:13**)

Part Seven:

Title: “**The Problem of Selfishness**”

Scripture Reading: **James 4:1 – 12**

Text: **James 4:1 (KJV)**

¹From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members?

Part Eight (Last Week): Wednesday, August 30, 2023:

Title: “**The Problem of Overconfidence**”

Scripture Reading: **James 4:13 – 17**

Text: “But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil” (**James 4:16**).


Now tonight:

Wednesday Evening, September 6

Title: “**The Problem of Fraudulent Gain**”

Scripture Reading: **James 5:1 – 6**

Text: **James 5:4 (KJV)**

⁴Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. **Phonetic Pronunciation:**  sab-ah-owth'

James 5:1-6 (HCSB)

¹Come now, you rich people! Weep and wail over the miseries that are coming on you.

²Your wealth is ruined and your clothes are moth-eaten.

³Your silver and gold are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You stored up treasure in the last days!

⁴Look! The pay that you withheld from the workers who reaped your fields cries out, and the outcry of the harvesters has reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts.

⁵You have lived luxuriously on the land and have indulged yourselves. You have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter.

⁶You have condemned—you have murdered—the righteous man; he does not resist you.

James 5:4 (HCSB)

⁴Look! The pay that you withheld from the workers who reaped your fields cries out, and the outcry of the harvesters has reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts.

Introduction:

In law a **fraud** is an intentional perversion of truth to induce another to part with some valuable thing belonging to him.

This is the charge that James lays at the feet of certain of those who will read this letter.

A question that these verses pose is, “*Is there some gain in my life that I have obtained by **fraud**?*”

Notice three truths that these verses present concerning fraudulent gain.

I. A Judgment is Proclaimed (James 5:1 – 3).

God demands personal integrity, and when covetousness pushes integrity aside and employs fraud and deceit to obtain its desires, there is a judgment to be faced.

A. Judgment is impartial (v. 1).

“*Come now, you rich people*” (v. 1 HCSB). God never confuses the “elect” with the “elite.”

No matter who you are or with what high esteem others may hold you, God *knows* those gains in your life that have come by **fraud**.

His judgment falls on them!

B. Judgment produces sorrow (v. 1).

“*Weep and wail over the miseries that are coming on you* (v. 1 HCSB).”

This is not a call to repentance; rather, it is a *proclamation of judgment*.

He who persists in obtaining his gains, not by honesty or personal merit, but by deliberate deceit and **fraud**, ultimately will know the sorrow his evil way has earned.

C. **Judgment reveals the triviality of worldly gain**
(vv. 2–3).

How trivial are the gains for which we labor.

Some have sold their souls to Satan so that they might dress in fine clothes and gain a little silver or gold.

But their wardrobes are moth-eaten, and their money is worthless! Christ warns of this in [Luke 12:15](#).

Luke 12:15 (KJV)

¹⁵ And he said unto them, **Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.**

Judgement is Proclaimed...

II. **Ample Evidence is Provided** (James 5:3–4).

The word “*rust*” in **verse 3** (KJV) shows how long the guilty have withheld wages from those to whom they were due.

James 5:3 (KJV)

³ Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

James 5:3 (HCSB)

³ Your silver and gold are corroded, and their corrosion

will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You stored up treasure in the last days!

They were calloused and did not care for others.

Verse 4 reveals that these men had gained much but at the expense of others.

James 5:4 (KJV)

⁴ Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth [Hebrew = “*Lord of Armies*” / “*Lord of Hosts*”].

James 5:4 (HCSB)

⁴ Look! The pay that you withheld from the workers who reaped your fields cries out, and the outcry of the harvesters has reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts [*Sabaoth*].

[Applicable Questions]:

- Have the *gains* in your life been at the *expense* of others?
- Have they *cost* someone their reputation?
- Have they *cost* someone sleepless nights, their future happiness, or their personal purity?
- If so, yours has been a *fraudulent gain*.

Judgement is Proclaimed...

Ample Evidence is Provided...

III. **A Verdict is Pronounced (James 5:5–6).**

The verdict of “*guilty*” is clearly pronounced.

James 5:5-6 (HCSB)

⁵You have lived luxuriously on the land and have indulged yourselves. You have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter.

⁶You have condemned—you have murdered—the righteous man; he does not resist you.

While the guilty were carelessly and greedily pampering their appetites and passions, the day of their judgment had already dawned, and they were not prepared!

- Like Belshazzar, they were reveling while the bloodthirsty foe was at the gate.
- In gaining what they had (**v. 6**), they condemned, falsely accused, and murdered the righteous.

For this they were pronounced “*guilty*” of *fraudulent gain*.

James 2:13 became a reality:

James 2:13 (KJV)

¹³For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

James 2:13 (HCSB)

¹³For judgment is without mercy to the one who hasn’t shown mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Conclusion:

- God does not forbid you from succeeding in life.
- He does not sit in condemnation for personal gain.
- But he does demand that whatever you gain be gained in *honesty* and *Christian fairness*.
- The ultimate question is not “*What does one have?*” It is “*How did he get it?*”

Beach, B. OBC—Wed 9/6/23—Part Nine of July/August Series on Book of James (borrowed from *The Pastor’s Annual*, 2012; T. T. Crabtree); edited some points and some parts to my own style.
