

Fleshed Out: A Journey Through the New Testament Letter of James

“The Haves and the Have Nots”

Discuss

Living in poverty is hard. Getting out of the cycle of poverty is hard. A majority of the world lives in an impoverished state. For centuries, this has been a major point of conflict for people. There are people who came from poverty and produced great wealth for themselves; there are also people who were born into wealth but squandered it all only to now live in poverty. James is going to outline the mindset we should have when it comes to the “haves” and the “have nots”.

“Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. Your gold and silver are corroded. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This corroded treasure you have hoarded will testify against you on the day of judgment. For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

“You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter. You have condemned and killed innocent people, who do not resist you.” [\(James 5:1-6. NLT\)](#)

- Is James talking about ALL wealthy people in this verse, or a particular group of people? What are some of the characteristics of the people that he is speaking to? Do people with wealth have the ability to do good?
- What are some of the sins that these wealthy people have fallen into? Are there any temptations that come with being wealthy or striving to acquire wealth? How can we avoid these pitfalls?
- Many of James’ criticisms surround the treatment of people. The mindset of the wealthy people that James is talking about have the power to take advantage of the people they should be helping. Are there people around you whom you have the power to help out because of the position that you are in? How would you be able to help those people?

Many people go through a few “rough patches” in their lives. Times when we are not employed, or maybe an unexpected emergency occurs. Maybe it is a time of emotional distress or a physical ailment. We can all relate to these situations, and James has some words of advice for us. He advises us against short-term thinking and to have patience because our ultimate hope is in the Lord and not our circumstances.

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“Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord’s return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near. Don’t grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door!” ([James 5:7-9, NLT](#))

- James calls us to have patience when life’s circumstances do not seem to be in our favor. Describe the patience that James is talking about. Does being patient equal taking no action?
- James encourages us to have a vision for life past the one we are currently living. In other words he is calling us to have an eternal mindset. What are some things / actions in your life that may change as you continue to develop this eternal mindset?
- What are some of the things that you are most looking forward to in the life to come? Reuniting with loved ones? Seeing God face to face? Take a few minutes to get a vision of what your life will be like without death, suffering or sorrow.

James has encouraged those who are wealthy to not depend solely on their wealth, and to see those who are not as wealthy as equals. He’s also encouraged those who are poor to put their hope in eternity and not their current circumstances. He is trying to bring everyone together to see that we are all in this life together.

Christians face this same challenge today. There are so many things that can divide us, but we are called to be a family. We can show the world how to love each other because of the hope we have in Jesus and because we are still going to be a family long after the end of this life.

“Take the old prophets as your mentors. They put up with anything, went through everything, and never once quit, all the time honoring God. What a gift life is to those who stay the course! You’ve heard, of course, of Job’s staying power, and you know how God brought it all together for him at the end. That’s because God cares, cares right down to the last detail.” ([James 5:10-11, MSG](#))

- Have you ever cried out to God when you needed help? What was the outcome?
- Why do you think God allows us to go through tough times?
- How do you define a “good life”? Are you currently living a life you would define as “good”?

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God wants us to live a life full of meaning and purpose. He wants us to have a vision for our life and a partnership with Him. There will be times of abundance and times of struggle. This life is not the end for the Christ follower, it is just the beginning and James calls us to live in light of this truth.

September 8 : [The Ground Online Book Club: “A Voice in the Wind”](#)

September 11: [Crisis Assistance Ministry Serve Day](#)

September 11: [Hope Vibes Serve Day](#)

Daily: [Training Camp](#)

Continued Reading

Read: [Luke 10:25-37](#)

Prayer

God,

You are the owner of everything. All that I have comes from you and I pray that I honor you with it all. I pray against the temptation to use the good things that you give me to separate myself from others, rather I want to use what I have to help those in need and to show the world how good you are.

Amen.