

James 5

Warning to Rich Oppressors

1Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. 2Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

Patience in Suffering

7Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. 8You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

10Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

12Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.

The Prayer of Faith

13Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 14Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

17Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

19My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, 20remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Chapter 5 opens a little strangely. It's not an affectionate tone, or an encouraging word, it's a rebuke. No one likes a rebuke right, especially not at 9:30 on a Sunday morning. Being the final chapter of the book, James feels the need to cover a couple of important areas before closing out the book. And so, Chapter 5 homes in on a few areas. This morning we're going to jump straight into these.

The first Point we can take from chapter 5 is:

1) LET'S BE GENEROUS (vs 1-6)

From the onset it's important to understand that James wasn't having a go at anyone who was rich, but rather at the wealthy who had let it get to their head.

- In the context of the time he was talking about business people and wealthy land owners who controlled much of Galilee. And also much of the Roman Empire. James' challenge is 3 fold. He challenges
 - Those who had a Materialistic accumulation of wealth
 - Those who were defrauding their workers
 - Those who were self-indulgent in their actions that had led to the innocent deaths of righteous people
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- James isn't saying their wealth is necessarily evil, but is tackling materialism, fraud, and the oppression of people based on their owner's self-indulgent attitudes.

He's tackling a selfish attitude.

It's when we stop noticing the poor,

It's when we aren't even affected by injustice,

It's when we're constantly focused on our own lives, its then that we lose a Kingdom heart

James builds on this in Verse 4: He says: 'The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty' - James reminds us that God hears the cries of the oppressed...

- You might say, well this doesn't really apply to me, but let's think about it for a minute..
- How do we treat those who work for us?
- How do we treat those who work in and around our home?
- Do we pay them the minimum required, or do we honour them over and above?
- Do we look for opportunities to bless, or do we withhold.
- If you're a business owner, and I had to interview your staff, what do you think they would say about you?

The lesson for all of us is that we need to be givers. And this challenges our hearts.

- **Our generosity earns us the right to talk about our theology.** Jesus often moved in generosity with the people while sharing with them. Feeding of the 5000.
- **Think of Zaccheus' encounter with Jesus, he immediately offer to pay back 4 time the amount.**
- **Time spent with Jesus = increased generosity.** It's like an equation. How do I become more generous, spend time in his presence
- When we are generous towards others, it opens up their heart. The gospel is overwhelmingly generous, The gift of salvation is generous.
- *Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;*

Let's be generous

2) LET'S BE PATIENT (Vs 7-12)

From verse 7, James moves his attention onto the oppressed. He uses the analogy of farming to encourage patience

'See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains'

- James is describing the Palestinian climate, in which the autumn rains would occur just after sewing, and the spring rains would occur just before harvest. These were the 2 most crucial rains needed for their crops to flourish!
- Fruit takes a long time to grow. Apples for instance take anywhere from 100-200 days to grow. These things take time. James is calling us to be patient.

Especially to be patient because the Lords coming is near, the Lords presence is near!

Hosea 12:6

Therefore, return to your God, Observe kindness and justice, And wait for your God continually.

- Waiting on God teaches to not go with our first plan. It teaches us not to be impulsive.

In verse 9 he then tells them not to grumble.

- Have you ever noticed how quickly your mood can change when a particular need isn't met. For instance, when you've maybe missed a meal and haven't eaten for hours, and you start to get a little more irritable. Or a lot more irritable.
- When we stand in a line for too long, we can easily start to grumble. And we know we do it...

It's amazing how easily we can moan! They actually done research on this: Globally, the average adult moans for 8 minutes and 46 seconds each day. 1300 times a year! We love a good moan don't we!

In the context James is writing in, the people had been oppressed for AGES.. it wasn't a matter of hours or days, it had been months and years! And James is saying even in your place of frustration, don't turn on one another, don't grumble and lose your temper.

- He then says, look at the prophets for example, many of which died for their faith.
- He says look at Job and how steadfast he was.

He then says: And you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. Let's find compassion from God before turning to others for sympathy. We're so quick to run to others first.

As soon as there's a crisis, what's one of our natural responses? Get you phone out and tell someone! I can't handle this alone!

Find your full assurance in God.

3) LET'S PRAY WITH FAITH

James immediately launches into a question:

Is anyone one of you suffering? He must pray

- We are called to pray for ourselves first

Is anyone joyful? He must sing praise

- We need to praise God in those moments

Is anyone sick? He must call the spiritual leaders of the church, and they must anoint them in the name of the Lord and this prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick

- Notice here that the prayer of faith is not from the sick person but by those praying. James gives no requirement for the sick person, except to call around the elders or overseers.
- Oil symbolizes the healing power of the Holy Spirit to come upon the sick person. And in the name of the Lord reminds us that it isn't the oil that heals but God that heals

James states this as though it should become common practice. As ready as you are to pick up the phone and book a doctor's consult, is as ready as you are to ask for prayer.

- We are also called to pray for each other. Check out verse 16!

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

This is one of those tough verses. That doesn't come with a whole bunch of Amen's. This is something that really doesn't come naturally.

- **Something Em and I noticed** when we came back from Greece was how isolated and private our living context is here. We live such guarded lives in terms of living arrangements, with our walls, our houses. Whereas in Greece, community living is the main trend. People are in one another's space a lot more.
- **Our Greek translator** couldn't believe how quiet we were during meal times. In his culture he said everyone talks while they eat.
- **Sometimes our culture limits us.**
 - Can you think of the last time you called someone up to meet for coffee so that you could confess your sins? This just seems foreign to us.

There is such shame around our sin, that often we prefer to hide it, to avoid possible judgement, but James is encouraging us to be more out there and vocal about our sin. Not to be proud about it, but to call it what it is! It's in our confessions that we find victory and freedom.

- **What if each one of us was a book.** In our society, many of us are closed books. We don't share much with others, we aren't vulnerable. But the tragedy here is that others will never get to read our story, to share in our struggles.
- **In our community group last month,** we opened up a time of sharing what our biggest fears and weaknesses were, and the level of vulnerability that came out was incredible. We felt as if we really got to know one another.

When we realize that we're all in this together, that we all sin, it becomes easier. When we find ourselves in a safe environment, we feel protected.

- **Confessing our sins** to someone who we trust is important, It keeps us humble and accountable. Praying for one another should be as natural as chatting about the weather or sport. Why, because we aren't defined by our sin. It's not who we are!

The second half of verse 16 is powerful!

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

AMP

The heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous man (believer) can accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God--it is dynamic and can have tremendous power]

Elijah was just like us and yet he prayed for it not to rain for 3 years

Remember I preached last year about when Jesus says 'you of little faith', which actually translates to you of brief faith!

Pray heartfelt prayers

Pray persistently

Let's trust God for testimonies to answered prayers.

Story of the prayer warrior granny on the Greece mission.

Our prayers can accomplish much when put into action by God!

We can't allow our faith to only be formed by experience. I'm not going to pray because God didn't answer my last prayer. We stand on the truth of who God is. He is the healer

Finally

Vs 19 'if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back'

Bring those back to faith. Don't forget about them, pursue them, think parable of the shepherd going after the one sheep and leaving the 99 behind.

CLOSE

The point to end on this morning is to remind you all of our heart of a church, to pray for one another, to minister to the sick. To stay accountable to one another...

If you need prayer, we're going to pray and trust God for a breakthrough and a healing.

Ministry