

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JANUARY 7TH – 8TH, 2023 // BOOK OF JAMES

### STEWARDS (JAMES 5:1-6) “...YOU RICH PEOPLE”

This section deals with wealthy landowners who abused their power and wealth to oppress the poor and take advantage of people.

- These were probably not Christians, but this warning goes even further for those who know the truth and claim a relationship with Christ.

### WEALTH IS NOT EVIL, BUT...

Affluence and influence are not evil, but how we use (or don't use) those resources can be. **When we have been given much, we are responsible for much** (Lk. 12:48).

- If we're selfish or abusive with our money and influence, we will be held accountable because, **ultimately, it all belongs to God.**

### THESE THINGS WILL PASS AWAY

Again, there is nothing wrong with success or having nice things, but the Christian should know that these things are temporary and do not ultimately fulfill us.

- **We must also have our priorities in proper order (God, marriage, family, community) as we spend our time and money.**

### WE ARE ALL HELD INTO ACCOUNT

**Not only people we consider wealthy, but all people will be held to account for how they stewarded what they had.**

- James says those who “stored up treasures in the last days,” “lived luxuriously,” and “indulged [them]selves” have gotten the attention of God in a bad way.

### HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO US?

If we've been given more than enough but withhold our time, money, and abilities from those in need or use our resources for selfish gain while others suffer, aren't we committing the same evil?

- As recipients of blessings, we're not to be selfish but to distribute blessings.
- There is practical balance in this. If we will **trust God with our giving to the local church** for the advancement of the gospel, **live within our means, take care of our families, and help those who don't have what they need**, we are free to enjoy the nice things in life.

### UNTIL THE END (JAMES 5:7-12)

#### LIKE LABOR PAINS (MT. 24)

Jesus told us that as time goes on, the aggression in the world and toward Christians would increase until He returned. James addresses this by telling us to “be patient until the Lord's coming.”

- **To think that it will somehow be easier to live for Christ later is not biblical.**

### HOW ARE WE TO LIVE IN TRUBULENT TIMES?

**Trials and persecution shouldn't surprise us**, but unfortunately, Christians often handle opposition poorly and, like the world, by complaining or retaliation.

- **We're not to be at war with people but evil spirits** (Eph. 6). **With people we're to be patient and loving as Christ is to us.**

### THE KINGDOM WILL STILL ADVANCE

We develop stamina and endurance to hold on because we know **Jesus is returning one day to usher us into Heaven and to deal with evil once and for all.**

- And, though evil is increasing, the gospel is as well. **We must not stop living and teaching the truth because many are receptive!**

### THE EXAMPLE OF THOSE BEFORE US

James uses OT examples, like the prophets and Job, to encourage us to stay strong through hard times. We can also look at the NT Christians and the martyrs as inspiration!

- **“Stand fast in the faith and love one another and don't be tempted to do anything wrong because of our sufferings.”** –Perpetua

### “LET YOUR 'YES' MEAN 'YES'”

V12 tells us to be honest so as not to “fall under judgment.” We're not to “swear” to God because **our lives should be of such integrity that what we say and how we live match.**

- **Let us apply that to our relationship with an all-knowing Creator. There is no deceiving God.**

### THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER (JAMES 5:13-20)

#### AN ANSWER WE OFTEN DISCOUNT

James tells us what to do in hard times and how to respond to good times: through **prayer**

and **praising** Jesus. In tough times, we tend to wallow in self-pity or anger. In good times, we often forget about God and slide back into sin.

- **We must learn to find strength and balance through prayer and praise!**

### WE ARE ALSO TO JOIN WITH OTHERS IN PRAYER

V14 says to have the elders pray for the sick (physical, mental, spiritual), “anointing [them] with oil in the name of the Lord.”

- The prayer offered in faith is based on the confidence that **God CAN heal all things even if, in His wisdom, He chooses not to. We must always pray, asking for God's will.**

### THROUGH PRAYER, WE'RE FORGIVEN

It is wise to enter into prayer with gratitude (Ps. 100) and to then address any sin in our hearts. God is not only quick to forgive, but **the prayers of repentant and obedient people are “very powerful in effect.”**

- **Jesus wants to address our hearts first because our souls matter most to Him.**

### BACK TO “EFFECTIVE” PRAYER

When we have a heart aligned with God through **confession, repentance, and obedience**, we pray for things in the will of God and therefore see results (effective).

- **We must strive to be righteous. Often times we don't see God moving because heart issues need to be addressed first.**

### ELIJAH, “A HUMAN BEING AS WE ARE”

Both Jesus and James mention Elijah as someone who was a flawed person but knew the will of God so well that he could perceive when God would perform miraculous things.

- Elijah is no different from us in the fact that **we all have access to God through prayer, and through that, we will see God work!**

### TURNING “A SINNER FROM THE ERROR OF HIS WAY”

V19 focuses on the spiritually sick. Those who claim to know Jesus but live in persistent disobedience to Him prove their claim is empty. We are to lovingly help people in this state.

- **To “save...soul[s] from death,” we must love them enough to pray for them and encourage them back into God's will.**

### STEWARDSHIP HIS RESOURCES

- Everything we have ultimately belongs to God.
- **We need to learn to trust God with our resources for our sake and for the sake of others' spiritual and physical well-being.**
- God is not anti us enjoying life, but in order to enjoy life fully, we must prioritize and live more open-handed.

### HOLDING ON IN A HOSTILE WORLD

- We know there will be hardships and hostility; the question is **if we will face those circumstances in a Christ-honoring manner.**
- **It will not get easier to follow Jesus.** Our “yes” needs to be clear and honest both for us and for the witness of Jesus to the people around us..

### THE POWER IN TALKING TO GOD

- In difficult times we must **not wallow in self-pity or anger but pray for help and thank God** for what He has done in our lives.
- In good times we must **fight complacency and still seek God's will through prayer.**
- The will of God and the power of God are available to help us and those we love.

### SOME TIPS ON EFFECTIVE PRAYER

- **Effective prayer begins with obedience.** We must seek His will and obey His commands.
- Pray similar to the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:9-13): **Praise/thank God, repent, pray for other people, then pray for yourself.**
- Learn to pray out loud.
- Pray sporadically and formally (scheduled).

### SIMPLE, PRACTICAL, AND EFFECTIVE

- James is not a complex letter. If we will simply **be humble and obedient “doers of the Word,”** we will not only be saved, but we will see God do amazing things.
- **The teachings and principles of the Bible are simple, practical, and they work if we will just commit ourselves to them.**