

**Sunday Bible Study Lesson: July 12, 2020**  
**James 5:1-12**

Chapter 5 of James begins with the theme of judgment. In the first century, “rich” became synonymous with “wicked,” and “poor” became synonymous with “righteous.” In verse 1, what does James direct the rich (those who are godless and wicked) to do?

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

The rich should be in distress because God’s judgment is coming upon them. In verses 2-3, James gives examples of things men have dedicated themselves to obtain, to protect, and to enjoy. What are those things, and what has happened to them?

Just as we know, the first-century Christians knew that gold and silver do not rust; thus, James is speaking figuratively. The images he provides are meant to show the worthlessness of wealth when compared to the value of loyalty to God. James expands his imagery in two ways. What two things will rust do (v. 3)? \_\_\_\_\_

Both of these images are meant to create a picture of doom for the rich (wicked). In verse 3, what else have the rich done? \_\_\_\_\_

Read Matthew 6:19-21: What did Jesus say about storing up treasures on earth?

In verses 1-3, James has announced a terrible judgment upon the rich. In verse 4, what example does James give to show how the wicked have oppressed others?

The harvesters of grain who had mowed the fields of the rich lived hand to mouth. In other words, they needed to be paid each day so that they could buy food. What does James say about the cries of the harvesters?

The refusal to give the workers what they had earned at the conclusion of the day’s work is related to the next accusations James makes. What are those accusations in verses 5-6?

The rich have selfishly enjoyed luxury and pleasure in utter disregard for the desperate needs of others. Just as an animal is fattened for slaughter; the rich are doomed by their “fattened hearts.”

In verse 6, most Biblical scholars agree that “killing is not to be understood literally, but refers to extreme violence, deprivation of liberty, oppression, and the like” (*Myers New Testament Commentary*). David Jeremiah states, “Whether the rich actually committed murder is not known, but these people would do whatever it took to remain rich. Perhaps by dragging the poor into court and depriving them of life’s necessities, they might have caused their deaths indirectly.”

James concludes verse 6 with “he does not resist you,” meaning that the rich were so powerful that all attempts to resist them would be vain, and that the injured and oppressed could do nothing but submit to their acts of injustice and violence.

In summary: The rich had been hoarding up money when it was unnecessary for their real support and comfort. Actually, they could have been using it for the good of others. Instead, they had been keeping back the wages which were due to those who cultivated their fields. They denied hired men just compensation for their labor. Furthermore, they had been giving themselves up to a life of ease and luxury, while at the same time they were oppressing good and just men who were too feeble to offer successful resistance.

In James 5:7, James uses the word “therefore” as he writes to the righteous who are discouraged and suffering under the oppression of the rich. His purpose in verses 5-7 is to call the righteous to realize that God’s judgment on the wicked is sure, and that the righteous should remain faithful to God. In this section of his letter, James uses an agricultural example to emphasize endurance. In verse 7, how long does James tell the believers to be patient? \_\_\_\_\_

The word “patient” is almost identical to the word “steadfast.” In verses 7-8, James tells the believers to be as patient as a \_\_\_\_\_. Evidently, the early believers felt that the time for Jesus’ return was overdue. James reminded them of the two periods of rain that occurred in Palestine--the early and the late. The early rain came in October and November, and the late rain came in April and May. The farmers depended on those two rains and could not harvest their crops until after the late rain. There are two ways that the believers can understand James’ comparisons: 1) If the farmer can be patient and wait for the harvest, the believers can also be patient and wait for the Lord’s return. 2) God is like the patient farmer who is waiting for the right time for Jesus’ return. (2 Peter 3:9: He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.)

In verse 8, James is reminding the believers that Jesus is going to return, and they just need to renew their courage and confidence--"strengthen your hearts." Why do you think it would be a challenge for believers to do so? \_\_\_\_\_

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In verse 9, what problem does James address? \_\_\_\_\_

This verse echoes James 4:12 in that it reminds us that God is the only Judge.

Evidently, the believers were blaming each other for their discouragement and distress.

As a result, in James 5:10, to whose example does James point? \_\_\_\_\_

They were examples of what two things? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

The believers needed a reminder that a mark of righteousness was their displaying of patience in times of suffering. James is the only New Testament writer to mention the name of Job (verse 11). Although during his times of suffering, Job complained and was impatient, James points to him as an example of endurance and perseverance. Even amidst his suffering, Job remained faithful to God. How does James describe the outcome of the Lord's dealings in verse 11?

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How would knowing those two characteristics of God help us to be patient and endure our own seasons of suffering and hardship? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read James 5:12 and Matthew 5:34-37. James begins, "But above all," which means what he is about to say is crucial. Both James and Jesus strictly prohibit swearing. The command is against a person using an oath to support what he or she says. For example, A person might say, "I swear that I will give up my children if this is not true." Often a first-century person would swear by heaven or by earth. In modern times, we have heard people say, "I swear on my mother's grave," "I 'pinkie' swear," or "I swear to God." In your own words, why do you think it is crucial for Christians to let their "yes be yes" and their "no, no?" \_\_\_\_\_

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When we say something, people should know that we speak the truth. We should be known for our integrity. To have integrity means to be honest, to be truthful, and to be trustworthy.

In James 5:12, what follows, "Let your yes be yes, and your no, no?" \_\_\_\_\_

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Matthew McCraw states that we need to think of judgment here because “those who profess Christ will be held accountable for how we lived as followers of Jesus. James is reminding us, encouraging us, and calling us to live lives that have truly been changed by Jesus. We must understand this: if we are consistently people who lack integrity in what we say; we are at best inconsistent followers of Jesus, and at worst; we are not Christians at all.”

Application for verse 12:

Think about what you say to others. Can people trust what you say? Circle one:

never    almost never    usually    sometimes    almost always    always

Can people count on you to follow through with what you say you will do? Circle one:

never    almost never    usually    sometimes    almost always    always

Do you need to apologize to someone for a time that you did not keep your word?

If yes, to whom: \_\_\_\_\_

To be a person of integrity, do you need to correct some things that you’ve said in the past? If yes, what is the plan to make things right?

\_\_\_\_\_

To be a person of integrity, do you need to apologize for some things that you’ve said in the past? If yes, to whom? \_\_\_\_\_

Heavenly Father, I praise you for being compassionate and merciful toward me. I praise you for Jesus, my Lord and Savior; and I praise you for the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life. Father, I confess that I do not always patiently endure times of trial and suffering. Help me to keep in mind that no matter what circumstances come my way, I can look forward to being with you in my heavenly home one day...whether when I die or when Jesus comes back for all believers. Search me, O God, and make me aware of things in my life that I need to make right with others. Help me to be a person of integrity in my words and my actions. In Jesus’ name, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen.