

The book of James

5:1-8

Welcome back to this week's study in the book of James.

✠ **James 5:1-6** *Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.*

You may be reading this week's verses and wonder whether you should not continue on with this week's study. You worry because you do have material things, and you know those who don't, and you haven't helped them.

I do admit these are tough verses to read, since we have so much here in the USA. We complain if we can only afford generic brands of food instead of name brands, or if we can only have hamburger and chicken instead of steak and lobster.

Maybe you don't have much and you are reading these verses and saying, "Yea, tell it like it is James." You have no pity on those who have and may even look down on them. Whichever one you may be, stop and think about last week's study and what we were learning about.

Remember we were studying taking up riches here on this earth and relying upon them without seeking the Lord first.

Luke 12:16-20 *Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'*

We must remember that even though the bible is broken up into verses and chapters, the books were not originally written like this. In fact they were letters to churches or a person and not books. The verses and chapters were put in by man.

Keeping this in mind, you must read these verses in the context of what James was previously saying.

✠ **James 4:13-5:6** *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.*

So reading it in the context it was written, it's clear that James is talking about those who take up riches without even consulting with God with what they should do with what they have, or who trust in the things they have rather than God.

We all, at one time or another, worry about paying our rent, or buying food for our family, and sometimes even gas for our cars just to get to work. Some may have lost their jobs and worry about how they will find a new job or supply for their family.

I could tell you numerous stories of how I went back and forth to work all week on three dollars of gas, and how I was able to pay bills when my paycheck wasn't enough, I could go on and on. But I don't want to build your faith in the things of this world, but rather in God. You see these few examples I have given you are to tell you that God supplies my needs, but I want you to understand that He supplies your needs as well.

We put so much trust in what we have, and when we don't have it, our faith seems to lessen. This is a wrong and sinful thing to do. Why? Because if you only pray to God when you don't have, or if you worry more when you have little or nothing then you are putting your trust in the material things of this world and not God. In other words, you have made the material things of this world your god. Why, because it's something you can see and you are putting your trust in what you see. But faith is trusting in what you can't see.

✠ **Heb 11:1** *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

If you read all of Hebrews chapter 11 you will know why it's called the faith chapter, for the writer speaks of many people in the Old Testament starting with Abel (Adam and Eve's son) and naming numerous people including Abraham, David and the prophets, who endured by faith.

But then at the start of chapter 12 (after the faith chapter) it says.

† **Heb 12:1 (NLT)** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us.*

So many times, the weight that slows us down is our faith or trust in the things of this world, and not God.

We claim we can't do for the Lord because we don't have the resources or money. We don't give because we don't think we have enough to give.

When we have, we seem to think less of the Lord and more about all the stuff we have or want to get.

And when we don't have we spend one-minute asking God to provide and hours trying to figure out how we will meet or supply our own needs instead of waiting on the Lord to answer our prayers.

No wonder Paul said.

† **1 Tim 6:10** *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Right before this Paul says:

† **1 Tim 6:7-8 (NLT)** *After all, we didn't bring anything with us when we came into the world, and we certainly cannot carry anything with us when we die. So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.*

You may have heard all kinds of weird stories of what people requested when they died. One man loved his Cadillac so much that he was buried in it. Some will request jewelry or some sort of earthly thing to be buried with them. What happens to these things? They end up sitting in a pile of dust, which is what happens to a body when it dies and decomposes.

So does this all mean that it's bad to have material things? Yes, and no.

Yes, if the material things control you and you depend on them rather than God.

No, if you could care less if you lost everything as long as you have the Lord.

So if you do trust in the things of this world then these verses are speaking to you.

✂ **James 5:1-6 (NLT)** *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 have become worthless. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh in hell. This treasure you have accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the day of judgment. For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you*

have cheated of their pay. The wages you held back cry out against you. The cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every whim. Now your hearts are nice and fat, ready for the slaughter. You have condemned and killed good people who had no power to defend themselves against you.

And if you are not putting your faith in the things of this world, these verses are for you.

† **Prov 10:22** *The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it.*

† **Prov 15:16** *Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, Than great treasure with trouble.*

I have to wonder if James, who is Jesus' half-brother, heard Jesus' teaching.

† **Matt 6:19-21** *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Do you wonder where your heart is, or who or what you really worship?

Look at the things you have and what you do with them, or look at what you have and how you would feel if you lost them all.

Now look at Jesus, what do you do with Him, or how would you feel if you lost Jesus? These things will tell you where your heart really is.

Agur said it perfectly in the book of Psalms.

† **Prov 30:7-9 (NLT)** *O God, I beg two favors from you before I die. First, help me never to tell a lie. Second, give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs. For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name.*

May this be your and my prayer!

James goes on to say.

✠ **James 5:7-8** *Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

If you won the Lotto, would your relationship with the Lord really change? We say we could do so much for the Lord if we had a lot of money and didn't have to work.

But if you read what James is saying here, he is talking about those normal people like you and me who have to work for our money each week. James says to be patient and content, do your work at the job God has given you, and when payday comes, you will get a paycheck.

To end this week's study, please note the last thing James said in verse 8.

✎ You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

For two thousand years, it has been taught that Jesus is coming back. I believe this with all my heart and I get excited about it every time I think about it, or read it in God's word.

But there are those who say, "Yea, we heard this before but where is He?"

It may be that Jesus is waiting for you to come to Him!

✝ 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

May God richly bless you in His love grace and mercy, and if you haven't, may you accept His Son Jesus as your Lord and Savior this day!