

# James 5:1-11

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. I hope you have a copy of God's word with you this morning. If you do, please join me in James chapter 5. While you're getting there, let me thank you for dealing with the frenetic nature of parking and getting in here and finding a seat.

Glad you've parked and I'm glad you're seated. The mistake of our often unpreparedness can be noted, but I don't believe that it's a mistake that any of you are here this morning.

We're glad to have you. Now, if you have turned to James chapter 5 and you are astute, you may be glancing across these 11 verses and see no explicit mention of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And you're wondering why. I think it's a fair thing on Easter Sunday to open up a text that very explicitly speaks of the resurrection.

However, we're a resurrection people. Speak of the resurrection of Jesus Christ each and every Sunday, whether implicitly or more explicitly.

[ 1 : 19 ] In a lot of churches this morning, and I think for very good reason, many pastors are making an apologetic case for the resurrection. They're founding the Christian faith on the resurrection as they should.

Their large concern is for those who have come maybe to church that one day out of the year. And they're concerned for their souls.

I once heard a pastor who entitled an Easter sermon, Where Have You Been Since Christmas? So why the beginning of James chapter 5?

Well, you see, this book has been our text for some months now as our habit is to verse by verse preach through a book of the scripture. And I want you to see that James is concerned with the resurrection and more specifically how we ought to live in light of the resurrection, which I think makes this altogether an appropriate Easter Sunday text.

So before I read the text, our text for today will be James chapter 5, verses 1 through 11. I just want to help you see how it is that James is concerned about the resurrection and how we live in response to it.

[ 2 : 36 ] First, you will note in James chapter 1 and verse 1, his salutation says, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus could not reign and be called Lord had he not been resurrected to the 12 tribes in the dispersion. Greetings.

So he begins his letter with an understanding of who he is and who he is in relation to a risen Lord Jesus Christ. And as we continued our study in James, we have seen a number of exhortations to not be deceived, particularly in chapter 1, James 1, 16.

James writes, do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. And in verse 22, he says, but be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves.

And then verse 26 of chapter 1, he says, if anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

[ 3 : 48 ] So he uses a particularly troubling example of how these professing Christians were not living in accordance with that profession of faith.

Right. Being those who make some assent to the knowledge of Jesus, but don't give their lives over to have him.

James knows that it is altogether possible to profess faith in Jesus Christ and for that faith to not be saving faith.

In chapter 2, he writes, beginning in verse 14 and following, what good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?

Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

[ 4 : 47 ] So also, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, you have faith and I have works.

Show me your faith apart from your works and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one, you do well.

Even the demons believe and shudder. So it's possible to gather with the church on Easter Sunday. It's possible to say, yes, I believe that Jesus Christ is resurrected from the dead and not be found in him.

And a lot of the New Testament authors are concerned about this. This is the major concern of James's letters to these professing Christians. So in these 11 verses, James juxtaposes two categories of people, the most important categories of people, the faithless and the faithful.

This morning, once again, he is showing us some measure of what will characterize the one who has truly believed in the saving power of the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 6 : 07 ] So James chapter five verses one through 11 is our Easter Sunday text for today. Before I read it, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us, that it was written for his glory and our good.

And so we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands. James five, beginning in verse one and following. Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.

Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire.

You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your field, which you kept back by fraud or crying out against you. And the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person.

[ 7 : 16 ] He does not resist you. Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it until it receives the early and the late rains.

You also be patient. Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged.

Behold, the judge is standing at the door. As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast.

You have heard of the steadfastness of Job and you have seen the purpose of the Lord. How the Lord is compassionate and merciful. So we will first consider in brief the first six verses of chapter five.

And if you were here with us last Sunday, you know that that was our planned text for last week.

And I said for a number of reasons we were going to put it off. And so I will admit that I'm kind of cramming it into the beginning of our consideration of the last five verses.

[ 8 : 25 ] But nonetheless, I want you to see this juxtaposition that James is setting up for us. And we find these six verses summary in the very first verse.

James says, come now, you rich. Weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Now, I don't think that James means to say simply those with things.

He's characterizing a people. A people who profess to follow Christ and yet live for themselves. And it's evidencing itself in this particular way.

And this is not the first time that someone wealthy sitting under the reading of this letter has been specifically addressed. James back in chapter one and verse nine and following says, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation.

Because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away. But the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flower falls and its beauty perishes.

[ 9 : 30 ] Here's the key sentence here. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. His life is set toward his own personal gain, his own luxury, his own self indulgence.

So James is saying that what a person pursues evidences where his heart is. And he's, of course, not the only one to say this.

Right. His half brother, the Lord Jesus, said this in a number of places. Let me take you on a fast tour through the book of Matthew chapter six and verse 19. Jesus said, 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 treasure in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. Right. He's saying it's foolish to store all of your pursuit, all of your energy into things that will go away that are not lasting.

And then in verse 21, he says, for where your treasure is there, your heart will be also. And then at verse 24 of Matthew six, Jesus says, no one can serve two masters for either.

[10:50] He will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

And I think here this is the type of person that James is writing to this person who thinks I'm going to say the phrase correctly, that they can have their cake and eat it, too.

Right. Right. Who thinks that they can have God, but not on his terms, but on theirs. They can have all of the pleasure, all of the joy, all of the comfort of the world and add a little God to the midst of that.

They think they can have two masters. Jesus goes on in the book of Matthew to give an example, a real example of a person who thought they could do both.

And you may know this person as the rich young ruler. We can read in Matthew chapter 19, verse 16 and following. And behold, a man came up to him saying, teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?

[12:01] And he said to him, why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments. He said to him, which ones?

And Jesus said, you shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The young man said to him, all these I have kept. What do I still lack? Jesus said to him, if you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me.

What Jesus is saying to him is not you must do a certain number of things. You must be good enough. What Jesus is saying to him is you must evidence in your heart with your very being that you love God more than this world.

And the response of the young man is this. Verse 22. When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions.

[13:11] He loved what the world had offered him and he was not willing to give it up. To follow Christ. The person with a credible, saving profession of faith in Jesus Christ will hold very loosely to the things of the world.

It does not mean that we don't own things. We will hold loosely to them. These people, credible professions of faith, will not live for this world, but rather for the world to come.

We will ask the question, the things that we have, how do these get used for future glory? How am I meant to use my home and my car and my retirement?

What am I supposed to do with this? For the glory of God, that one day I might find I have more heavenly treasure than I could have ever possessed here on earth.

A lasting treasure, a treasure that never fades. Right? That will not be destroyed. James deals very harshly with the people that were professing faith in Christ, but living in contradiction to that profession.

[14:23] These are our people who want the promises of the cross without the suffering of it. And beloved, those who place their faith in Christ are going to be a suffering people.

James indicts these people for four things. Number one, and it's super fast. We're going to kind of glance over these. Number one, for hoarding. Verses two and three.

They've amassed it and amassed it and amassed it. Right? In the last days, they've laid up treasure on earth. He indicts them for fraud. They haven't paid what was owed to others.

He indicts them for self-indulgence. Verse five. Living on the earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

And fourthly, for murder. And we talked about the beginning of chapter four. Perhaps a murder had actually taken place. Right? There's quarrel and division amongst them.

[15:29] But we can know for sure, as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, that if we have hatred in our hearts towards others, then we have murdered them in our hearts. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person.

So they're being indicted in a way that should not be true of the Christ follower. Right? Because Christ followers ought to be generous and honest and hospitable and kind.

These are the types of characteristics that express our faith. And I would assume that they were genuine Christ followers.

Right? He's also writing to who were being generous, honest, and hospitable and kind. And they were being taken advantage of by these indicted people of verses one through six.

Which perhaps is why James says in verse seven, be patient. Therefore, he's turning his attention to a different group. Right?

[16:31] The group that has received the oppression of these others that are indicted. And so we'll spend the rest of our time in the last five verses.

And as I do generally give you a simple outline. Here it is. For these last five verses, it's a three-point outline. Number one, be patient. Number two, be patient.

And number three, be expectant. Number one, be patient. Verse seven, he says, be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.

See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it until it receives the early and the late rains. That means for a full season, he is patient.

Patient. As a people who are not living for this world, but rather for the world to come, we will have to be patient. I mean, our temporal lives are very brief in the scope of eternity.

[17:37] James recognizes this in the previous chapter, chapter four and verse 14. He says, what is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

That's how we ought to think of our lives. But even though our lives are that very brief in the scope of eternity, they don't always feel that way.

And James recognizes this. Life feels so long. And so he exhorts us to be patient, to wait, to hold fast to the promises of God as we set ourselves toward his coming.

A coming that would not be possible apart from the resurrection. And he illustrates this in the example of the farmer. And I don't think we need to overcomplicate this point.

He simply says, look, look at the way the farmer, right? Tills the soil, puts the seed into the soil, and then he waits.

[18:44] Right? There's a promise. It will come to pass. Right? Year after year after year. He's seen the harvest come forth. And so he is patient. Right?

As it receives the early, receives the late, and then the harvest comes. So be patient. Secondly, be patient.

I find it very striking that he repeats the exhortation. He gives the example of the farmer, and then he says, you also be patient.

It goes on to say, establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. And then down in verse 10, he gives an example of suffering and patience in the prophets and in Job.

So as the second point, you may think, be patient and particularly be patient in suffering. James has this in mind as he's writing this letter to those who have been dispersed all over the known world.

[19:48] Right after his greeting, which I read to you previously, James 1, 1. He says, greetings. And then he says this in verse 2. He says, count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

For you know, this is why it's joy. For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. Right?

Produces a waiting, a patient waiting. And let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

He gives this example of the prophets in chapter 5 and verse 10. Right? Look to the prophets, he tells these Jewish Christians dispersed everywhere.

Right? We see an example of this in Hebrews chapter 11, 35 through 38. The author of Hebrews records, some were tortured, refusing to accept release so they might rise again to a better life.

[ 20 : 55 ] Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned. They were sawn in two. They were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy.

They were so lucky. Wandering about in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. In the sermon that Stephen preached that led to the very first Christian martyrdom that we can read about in verse 52 of Acts 7.

He said this. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? The prophets, those who came and spoke in the name of the Lord.

Which James is very careful to say. Right? James is saying that the prophets did not endure suffering for wrongdoing, but for right doing. Right? For speaking in the name of the Lord. And what did they receive for that?

Persecution. Suffering. Trials of various kinds. We have a strange temptation to believe that we can somehow avoid the suffering of all those who were obedient to our Lord.

[ 22 : 08 ] We somehow fit in a special category that we can avoid the suffering of our Lord. And beloved, this is simply not true.

Jesus said this in John chapter 15, verse 18 and following. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. Which is conditional.

And you've said, well, this is if. But what does he go on to say? If you were of the world, the world would have loved you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said to you. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. Paul wrote at the end of his life, his last letter to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3.12. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

[ 23 : 23 ] We will be hated for our testimony that we worship a risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We will be a people who conform our lives to his and we will suffer for it.

Peter writes in 1 Peter 4, verse 12 and 13. Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you.

Why? Why should we not think it's strange that we suffer for the name of Christ? He tells us in verse 13. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

If we want Christ's glory, we must have Christ's cross. And we must be patient in our suffering. This life is temporal, right? It is a mist that vanishes. And it will be an uncomfortable life for the Christian.

[ 24 : 37 ] A world that hated Christ, that put him to death. If we want the resurrection, we must also have the cross. Thomas Valentine, who's a Puritan preacher, and this is a quotation on your bulletin this morning, said, Patience is a quiet, silent temper of soul by which we submit to God in all our crosses.

So as we are patient, as we're waiting in our suffering, we ought to also be, and this is our third point, expectant.

Be expectant. In verse 7 we see, Be patient therefore, brothers, until something, until the coming of the Lord.

And then again in verse 8, right? Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. And then the last part of verse 11.

You have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. Jesus, our Lord, has been raised from the dead.

[ 25 : 53 ] He appeared to the apostles and many others that they would be a witness to his resurrection power. He has ascended to the right hand of God the Father, the place of honor and power, where he rules over all things and from where he is establishing his church.

And praise be to God, he will one day return to judge the wicked and vindicate those who are righteous in him. These things are certain because of the resurrection.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1, verse 20, For all the promises of God find their yes in him. Jesus had not been raised.

He just would have been a man named Yeshua. But because he is raised, he is the Christ. And all the promises of God find their yes in him. And he will one day return, right? That is what we are waiting for. But we are waiting. We are longing for that day. So let us be patient in our waiting, but let us be also expectant.

[ 27 : 03 ] What a glorious thing to wait for. To long for. That day when all things will be made new. When the suffering of this world will be put to an end for those in Christ.

No one knows the time that the Lord will return. Even Jesus himself stated that he doesn't know the hour. If anyone claims to know, run from that teacher. To us, this may seem to be taking forever. I think about every generation has predicted that it would be in their time that the Lord would return. And I would just suggest to you, as things in the world seem to be falling apart, there's a temptation to do the same.

And perhaps, but we don't know. Let's take a lesson from history. Everyone's thought, but we don't know. As long as Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father and building his church, until that number is complete, he won't return.

And when that number is complete, it will be a glorious thing. What a wonderful thing. God's people will praise when Christ comes back. But in the meantime, it seems to take so very long.

[ 28 : 21 ] Peter again, 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 9 said, The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promises as some count slowness.

So perhaps we ought to be more expectant. Perhaps we ought to long more for that day. Kent Hughes is a contemporary pastor who wrote a commentary on the book of James.

It's a good one. I would commend it to you. He wrote this, quote, Nature provides an illustration of this kind of impatience. The life of a mayfly is exactly one day.

Suppose a mayfly hovering over a pool of water for the one spring day of its life was capable of observing the tadpole offspring of a frog in the water below.

In the mayfly's aged afternoon, having seen no change in the tadpole, it would be impossible for the mayfly to conceive that the tadpole's becoming a frog was very near.

[ 29 : 28 ] So it is with us in our mayfly existence in Christ's calendar. Our ephemeral day does not negate the nearness of his coming.

Christ will return. It has been guaranteed by his resurrection. And in the meantime, we long for that day.

We are expectant for that day. Wes Shelnut, my best friend, one of our founding elders, led our music for a bunch of years. Many of you know him, many of you don't.

That's getting sad that I have to explain who he is to you. But when he and Liz were awaiting the arrival of their firstborn, named Evie, he shared with the church a thought about expectancy that has always stuck with me.

I just really appreciated what he said. He said that our waiting on the Lord should have the expectancy of being in the last days of waiting on a baby to arrive.

[ 30 : 30 ] We don't know exactly the time, but we arrange everything in our lives around this special event. Bags are packed. Meetings at work are carefully scheduled or sometimes just not scheduled at all.

Parents lie down thinking, perhaps tonight. And they arise in the morning thinking, perhaps today. Cars are fueled. Calls from your wife are never ignored.

Everything revolves around the coming of this child. Now, as a father of three, I will say it gets less. As you have more, you kind of go, yeah, yeah, it'll be okay.

We'll figure it out. But that first one, you don't know what you don't know. And everything in your life is arranged around this arrival.

There's so much expectancy. Beloved, our lives ought to be arranged expectantly for the coming of our Lord and King, the one Jesus Christ.

[ 31 : 36 ] For because he has been raised, he will return. And you and I should desire to be found faithful in that day. So be patient.

Be patient. Be expectant. Let's pray together.