

Sunday Morning Message

January 23, 2022

*Putting Your Faith to Work – Study of The General Epistle of James
Woes to the Wealthy Wicked and Support for the Suffering Saints*

Text – James 5:1 - 11

Congregational Reading – James 5:1 - 11

Introduction

We have been taking our time going through this General Epistle of James, which was the earliest New Testament Book, originally written to a predominantly Jewish Church; but through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, it was also intended for a much broader audience – Jew and Gentile alike - and designed to be applicable for many generations to come, including the time that we are in right now.

James is a very practical Book, which shows very plainly and bluntly how God's people should behave themselves. Back in chapter one, we examined two kinds of temptation and the wisdom that's available to us in order to overcome them. We also studied about the Word of God, and the fact that we need to be doers of the Word and not just hearers only.

There are two key verses in chapter one which revealed three tests that the Bible gives for people who truly belong to God. James is talking about people who really know God, and whose lives are truly being influenced by the Word of God. People who have real religion, not just people who have go through some sort of external ritual or ceremony, should be able to pass these three tests at least most of the time.:

"(26) If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. (27) Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:26-27)

Basically what James was saying is that true religion, which comes from a real relationship with Jesus Christ will impact your life in three ways:

1. It will cause you to control your tongue.
2. It will cause you to care about those who are less fortunate than yourself.
3. It will cause you to live a separated life.

Chapter two of James further developed that second test regarding how we treat others who are less fortunate than ourselves. James states that God's people should be impartial regarding the treatment of others. It does not matter if the person is rich or poor, cultured or uncultured, educated or illiterate, from the same race or a different race – everyone is equal in the sight of God, and should all be treated equally within the church.

Chapter two fully revealed the main theme of the Letter – Faith without Works is Dead. Our faith needs to impact the way we live and treat other people.

In the first twelve verses of chapter three, James drove home the fact that we need to get control of our tongues. The subject of the tongue is dealt with extensively in the Scripture, but chapter three of James' Letter is by far the most comprehensive passage in the Scripture dealing with the words that we say to each other.

In these last six verses of chapter three, James showed us what godly wisdom looks like as contrasted with the wisdom of this world. God is the source of all wisdom, and He will give us the wisdom that we need to handle all that we will face while here on this earth.

In the first ten verses of chapter four, James continued to give us a lot of great practical truth. In those ten verses, we saw aspects of God that are important for us to understand if we are going to be all that we can be for Him while here on this earth. In vs. 1 – 10, we discovered:

1. God Is the Source – Supplication is the Means (vs. 1 – 3)
2. God is Singular – Separation is the Mandate (vs. 4 – 6)
3. God is Sovereign - Submission to Him is a Must (vs. 7 – 10)

In the final verses of chapter four, James reminded us about that we won't be here on this earth for very long, so we should not be judgmental toward each other, considering the fact that very soon we will be facing the final Judge ourselves; the One who judges with perfect judgement; the One whose eyes see everything. His final conclusion in chapter four was that, in view of the fact that we don't have much time left here on the earth, we should get busy doing what we know He wants us to do.

Transition

Here in chapter five, James will send a strong condemnation to the people who are very rich in what this world can give them, but are not saved and care nothing for the things

that are eternal. We can all be admonished from this passage, however, because we are all very well-off financially speaking here in this nation, especially when we compare ourselves to much of the rest of the world. By contrast, however, James was writing to believers in the first century who were really struggling. They were a poor and persecuted people who had little going for them while they were here on the earth, but had great rewards waiting for them in Heaven.

I. A Strong Reprimand to the Wealthy Wicked (vs. 1 – 6)

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you." (James 5:1-

6)

It is important to see from these verses that James is not speaking here regarding wealthy saints. He is talking about the wealthy who are lost, and are persecuting the saints. (See also James 2:5 – 7). These people made their wealth by cheating others, and especially by oppressing the poor believers.

Notice in verse 4 the phrase "Lord of Sabaoth" (only found here and in Romans 9:29) – similar to the Old Testament phrase "Lord of Hosts." The idea is that the omniscient and omnipotent Lord knows all about it and will deal with these people who have oppressed his saints.

This passage is reminiscent of the story that Jesus told in Luke's gospel regarding the rich man who "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:" (Luke 16:19) and Lazarus, the poor beggar. You will remember that the rich man ended up suffering in the flames of Hell, not because he was rich but because he was lost. The saved poor beggar, Lazarus, ended up in the place of comfort, in Abraham's Bosom.

Practical Notes for those of us who are wealthy; and in America, most of us are wealthy. Don't get too comfortable down here. This earth is only temporary. Invest your life and your living in the things that really matter; the things that are eternal.

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

II. A Certain Reward for the Suffering Saints (vs. 7 – 11)

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." (James 5:7-11)

Verse 9 – “grudge not” - Notice that nestled in the middle of this section, in verse 9, is a subtle reminder to believers regarding griping and complaining to, or about, each other. The word, “grudge (στενάζετε from στενάζω – *stenazō*) has the idea of murmuring or griping, kind of under your breath. James reminds us here as he did in that section in chapter four regarding being judgmental that we will all stand before the Lord one day, and at that time, we will be entirely focused on our own life; our own decisions. We won't be blaming anyone else. I have observed that people tend to complain about others as a defense mechanism to keep the focus off of themselves. Often complaints are born out of our own inner frustrations with what we are doing wrong; what we are not getting right. So, we put the focus on somebody else instead.

When we stand before the Lord one day, He will not be asking us about anybody else, He will be dealing with us as individuals.

Verses 7 – 8; 10 – 11 - patience

The word “patient” or “patience” is found five times in these four verses.

There are two Greek words translated “patience” in this passage. Four times the word “μακροθυμέω” (*makrothymeō*) is used. Once, in verse 11, the word ὑπομονήν from ὑπομονή - *hypomonē* is used. They are both very similar in meaning and are almost used interchangeably. One of them focuses more on the endurance of suffering, and the other has the idea of patiently waiting and not giving in or quitting.

Thayers Lexicon states that patience is: “the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings”

Patience has the idea of enduring, waiting, and persevering.

The Bible Exposition Commentary states:

Patience is the ability to endure when circumstances are difficult. Self-control has to do with handling the *pleasures* of life, while patience relates primarily to the *pressures* and *problems* of life. (The ability to endure problem people is “long-suffering.”) Often, the person who “gives in” to pleasures is not disciplined enough to handle pressures either, so he “gives up.”¹

Examples of N.T usage of the word ὑπομονή (hü-po-mo-nā'):

Note – we are going to look at a lot of Scripture. In 2 Peter 1:6, God tells us to diligently add patience to our faith. If God wants us to add patience to our faith, then we better have a good understanding of what the Biblical concept of patience is:

Warning – This is a Bible heavy message

Turn to Luke 8:4 – 15:

"And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (2 Pe 1:5). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." (Luke 8:4-15)

In the parable of the sower, we see that only those that are in the fourth category have exhibited self-control, and patience. They endured, they persevered, even though it became unpopular, even though it became difficult.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 1:3 – 7:

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring [ὑπομονή (hü-po-mo-nā') - patience] of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." (2 Corinthians 1:3-7)

Turn to 2 Thessalonians 1:3 – 5:

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:" (2 Thessalonians 1:3-5)

Turn to Revelation 2:1 - 3

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." (Revelation 2:1-3)

Turn to Hebrews 12:1 – 2

*"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him **endured** [ὑπομένω (hü-po-me'-nō) the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)*

According to Hebrews 12:1 – 2, God has a purpose (a race) for each of our lives. In many respects our individual races are the same as everybody else's, but in many other ways, our races are unique. God wants you and I to finish our race, but if we are going to be able to fulfill our purpose in life, we must run the race patiently, meaning, we must keep running even when the pressure is on us to quit.

Illustration from The Daily Bread:

George Matheson wrote, "We commonly associate patience with lying down. We think of it as the angel that guards the couch of the invalid. Yet there is a patience that I believe to be harder -- the patience that can run. To lie down in the time of grief, to be quiet under the stroke of adverse fortune, implies a great strength; but I know of something that implies a strength greater still: it is the power to work under stress; to have a great weight at your heart and still run; to have a deep anguish in your spirit and still perform the daily tasks. It is a Christ-like thing! The hardest thing is that most of us are called to exercise our patience, not in the sickbed but in the street." To wait is hard, to do it with "good courage" is harder!

A. Biblical Models of Patience

There are many examples in the Bible we could look at:

1. **Noah** – It took 100 years to build the ark. The ark was built in a place that was not near a body of water, and up until the time of Noah, it had not ever rained. Consider for a moment how much mocking Noah and his family must have endured while fulfilling God’s purpose for their lives.
2. **Elijah** – He was a prophet during a time of great apostasy. It was not at all popular to be a godly man, faithfully proclaiming the Word of God. Ahab the king, and Jezebel the queen, both wanted Elijah dead. Elijah faithfully and patiently endured, fulfilling God’s purpose for his life.
3. **The Lord Jesus** – He set his face “like a flint” for the Cross, and He let nothing waver Him from His purpose of redeeming man through the shedding of His own blood.
4. **Steven** – The first Christian martyr (besides the Lord). He remained faithful to his mission of proclaiming the gospel of Christ, even when the stones were being hurled at him.
5. **Paul** – Turn to 2 Corinthians 11:23 – 30

"Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;"
(2 Corinthians 6:3-5)

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities." (2 Corinthians 11:23-30)

Paul was able to say at the end of his life:

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

6. The Saints from Hebrews 11:36 - 40

"And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." (Hebrews 11:36-40)

B. Biblical Mandates Regarding Patience

1. Just Keep Going (even when it hurts - determination)

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Romans 5:1-5)

2. Receive Encouragement from the Bible

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 15:1-6)

3. Ask God for Help

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:2-5)

Conclusion

Illustration

The value of courage, persistence, and perseverance has rarely been illustrated more convincingly than in the life story of this man (his age appears on the right):

Failed in business 22 Ran for Legislature--defeated 23 Again failed in business 24 Elected to Legislature 25 sweetheart died 26 Had a nervous breakdown 27 Defeated for Speaker 29 Defeated for Elector 31 Defeated for Congress 34 Elected to Congress 37 Defeated for Congress 39 Defeated for Senate 46 Defeated for Vice President 47 Defeated for Senate 49 Elected President of the United States 51

That's the record of Abraham Lincoln.

Illustration

Young William Wilberforce was discouraged one night in the early 1790's after another defeat in his 10 year battle against the slave trade in England. Tired and frustrated, he opened his Bible and began to leaf through it. A small piece of paper fell out and fluttered to the floor. It was a letter written by John Wesley shortly before his death. Wilberforce read it again: "Unless the divine power has raised you up... I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that (abominable practice of slavery), which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, be not weary of well-doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of His might."

"Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in, except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy." (Winston Churchill)