

James 5:1-6 (Teaching)

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[0 : 00] Morning. Good morning. Good morning. The Book of James is starting on the last chapter of James, chapter five.

James is a short book, a whole lot in that. Like I said before, James is in my personal opinion, probably the most practical book in all of the scripture.

We finished off last week with the passage at the end of chapter four saying, what is your life? And that is nothing more than a vapor that's here for a little while and then the passion is away. And we kind of left off with that thought. And of course we shouldn't say, we shouldn't depend on tomorrow because tomorrow is not promised to us.

But instead we should say if it be the Lord's will that we live, that we'll do this and that. That's the thoughts that we kind of finished up with last week.

[1 : 10] So this week we'll start chapter five. Chapter five is a little bit different than the other four chapters that we've been through. In that, chapters one through four, each of those chapters have basically two subject matters per chapter.

Chapter five is unlocked. Chapter five is, in my opinion, it's almost frantic, almost chaotic. It's like James was trying to cram as much as he could in the last little bit of his letter.

And I'm not sure why that would have been. I wasn't there. I don't know why James might have been writing like that. There's some people that say that James was, could have been in a position where he knew that his time was coming, where he knew that he was going to be killed.

Others say that he only had an X amount of time before he could get this letter to somebody to have it delivered to the twelve tribes, which are scattered abroad, which begins chapter one.

I don't know why James would have ended his letter like this. Something we do need to remember is that this wasn't divided up into chapters one through five when James wrote it.

[2 : 30] So it may have just been, you know, James' hand might have been cramping and he was trying to get as much done as he could before his hand locked up on him. I mean, we don't know. We don't know why he wrote like that.

But there's a lot more subject matters in chapter five than there are in chapters one through four. And you can develop your own opinions as to why that is and I'll have mine and none of us will be able to prove the other one different, because we just simply don't know.

James five, and I've reiterated and reiterated over and over going through James. This is a letter to the church and it is. It's a letter to the church, to believers and Christ.

James chapter five is no different and the beginning of James chapter five is no different. However, James is addressing unsafe people in the beginning part of this chapter.

And, you know, just like churches nowadays, there's churches everywhere. It's got unsafe people in people who've been going to church for 10, 20, 30 years still sitting up here, unsafe.

[3 : 39] And you'll never convince me that in these churches that have, you know, five and 600 and 1000 people per service that every member of those churches are safe.

You just never convinced me of it. And it was no different in James's day. So as I've said through James chapters one through four, it is a letter written to believers and Christ.

And it's addressing unbelievers or the state of unbelievers and how unbelievers should act in the first few verses of chapter five. So we'll pick up James chapter five again.

First one he says, go to now you rich man, weep and how for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten.

Your gold and silver is conquered and the rest of them shall be a witness against you and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped treasure together for the last days.

[4 : 43] We'll stop and go back to verse one. Go to now is no different than James chapter four verse 13 where he says go to now. It's a Greek expression meaning come now or listen here.

Pay attention to this. Take heed is basically what James is saying there. Says go to now you rich man and weep and how for your miseries that shall come upon you.

This is easily overlooked if you just scan through the scripture. He's not talking about weeping and crying and lamenting over miseries that may be upon these people in the present.

He says upon the miseries that shall come upon you. It's going to be future tense. What James is referring to here and he's talking about the rich people and he's talking about the rich people within the congregations of these 12 tribes which are scattered abroad.

And this isn't the first time that James has brought up the brought up rich people in this letter. He brought them up in chapter one. He brought them up again in chapter two and he's brought them up here in chapter five.

[5 : 53] However in chapter one if you remember in chapter one he talks about the poor people the lowly. He says that they should be happy. They should feel blessed in their current state for they should be exalted.

He says in the rich man and that he is made low. He's talking to believers in Christ when he says that in chapter one. But he tells the rich man that he should feel blessed. He should be happy.

He should be tickled that he has been made low in chapter two. If you remember when the rich man or when a rich man is brought up it's talking about a rich man coming into the congregation.

Someone coming in in their goodly apparel and someone looking the part and acting the part. And it's talking about the respect that the congregation has toward the rich man as opposed to the poor man.

Nothing against or for the rich man there. That was all directed at the congregation. But here he's just bluntly addressing the rich people.

[6 : 59] And this isn't to say that all rich people are condemned in their centers and their low hope form and they're all going to hell. That's not what James is saying. That's not what scripture teaches and that's not what I'm teaching.

But he says go to now you rich men weep and how for your miseries that shall come upon you. He's addressing the rich people in the congregation that are depending upon their riches.

They're depending upon their material things. They're depending upon their status. They're depending upon everything except for the Lord. And really as an extension you could say to this and it's not within context here.

But folks that's the way that all sinners should act. They should weep and they should howl. They should lament over the miseries that shall come upon them. They may be living a good life right now. Not just rich folks but poor folks that are unsaved.

You know middle class folks that are unsaved. Anyone that's unsaved should weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon them. But what do we do? We get rid of that. We override that with other things in our lives.

[8 : 10] We override it with material possessions. We override it sometimes with family, sometimes with friends, sometimes with money. I mean there's all kinds of things that we can use to push the miseries that shall come upon the lost.

There's all kinds of things that they can use to push those out of their minds. But James here is commanding the rich people within these congregations to weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

Your riches are corrupted. Your garments are moth. Now the garments that the rich folk wore back then and for the most part nowadays that spoke volumes about their riches.

About their monetary wealth. About what they had. This is evident all through scripture. I mean you read about these things all through scripture.

You read about the rich people wearing their purple and their fine linen. You read about that and the rich man in Lazarus in the parable of Jesus spoke about that.

[9 : 22] You read about how he fared sumptuously and you read about the lifestyle that they had. And this is what condemns rich people. The riches aren't sinned. Money is not sinned.

We know from what Paul wrote to Timothy that the love of money is the root of all evil. Not money itself. There's all kinds of rich people in scripture that I fully expect to see in heaven right now.

Solomon was a rich man. Job was a rich man. All these people throughout the scriptures were rich. But I fully anticipate seeing every one of them in heaven right now.

And their riches weren't their problem either. Job's riches weren't his problem. David's riches weren't his problem. His problem was lust. Solomon had a very similar issue. His problem was lust. It wasn't his money. He didn't let his money go to his head.

But riches can get in the way. That's why Jesus Christ said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it was for a rich man to go into heaven. Because the rich depend upon themselves. They depend on what they have.

[10:27] They depend on what they've gained to get them where they need or where they want to be. That's why it's hard for rich people to enter in. Nothing to do with them being rich.

This isn't a condemnation against money at all. It's the condemnation of what money can do to a heart. What money can do to a mind. We can let it go to our minds. We can let it go to our heads and to our hearts.

He says your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. This would have been an insult toward the rich being. First of all, riches didn't really consider it to be corrupted. Especially where he goes on in verse 3.

He says your gold and your silver is cankered. Well, cankered is just another word for overlaid with rust. Gold doesn't rust and silver doesn't rust. Now gold tarnishes and silver can decay but they do not rust.

Neither one of those metals rust. That's what James is saying here. He says 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.

[11:35] In other words, what you're depending on here, your riches, your gold, your silver, your precious stones, all these things you're depending on, your goodly apparel, your garments, all of these things, they are temporal and they will waste away one of these days. James can't tell them when. He can't pinpoint a date for them.

He's saying this stuff is worthless in the grand scheme of things. As far as temporal versus eternity, these things are absolutely worthless to you. That's what James is getting at. He says the rust of them shall be a witness against you. In other words, they're wasting away. They're decay. The rust of them will be a witness against you. They're very own things. They're riches. They're clothing. They're attitudes.

All of these things will be a witness against these rich folks that James is addressing here. Once again, James isn't condemning having money. He isn't condemning having money. If that was the case, he'd be condemning each one of us that are in this room right now. The first century church is not like the church here in 2022.

It was very poor. There were some rich folks in it and there were some good rich folks in it. There were some rich folks that had done everything that they could for the church. There were some rich folks that just wanted to take the church over. But if James is condemning having money, every one of us in here right now will be condemned. We are the richest and most prosperous nation on the face of the planet right now. What we consider poverty level, other countries around the world will consider rich.

So if that's the case, if that's what James is condemning, every one of us in here will be condemning. It's not having money that is condemning. It's letting that money go to our head and letting that money go to our heart.

[13:29] He says, your gold and your silver is cankered. The rest of them shall be a witness against you and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heat together, you have heat treasure together for the last days.

You're heaping these things up, you're hoarding them, is what I was saying. You're hoarding your wealth, you're hoarding your riches. What did James say in chapter 2? These rich folks that this was addressed at would have had this same letter or red in their congregations that James chapter 2 is talking about, talking about how we're supposed to take care of the poor.

Talking about how if one comes into the congregation that we're not supposed to show respect to the rich and shove the other one off into a corner somewhere. It talks also in chapter 2 how if someone comes into the congregation and they're cold and they're hungry and they're naked and all these other things, he says, what good does it do?

James says this in chapter 2, he says, what good does it do for us to tell them, go and be warm and filled if we give them not those things which are necessary to fulfill that for them?

What good does it do us to tell somebody, go and be warm if we don't give them a coat? What good does it do for us to tell someone, go and don't be hungry anymore if we don't feed them?

[14:46] It does no good. These same rich people would have heard that chapter, what we're reading as a chapter, they would have heard that part of this letter as well as this year. If heap together, you're heap treasured together for the last days, talking about their riches, becoming corrupted and becoming conquered and you're heaping it up for yourselves for the last days.

What James is saying is you shouldn't be hanging on to that, you should be helping. If you're truly a Christian, if you're truly born again, sane of God, these riches shouldn't be hoarded up in your treasuries.

They should be going out to help people. And I've said this since teaching James, I've said it beforehand and I'll continue to say it on in the future. God doesn't expect us to spend every penny that we earn in our jobs or wherever the case is on helping the needy.

God expects us to use some common sense, yes, but if we're hoarded it all up, I can't stand it when I hear of a little small church with a hundred people in it having a quarter million dollars in the bank. There's no sense of it. And listen, I understand keeping some money back in case something happens to the building. I'm all for that. But my goodness, help some missionaries. Help the needy.

[16:04] Feed the poor, clothe the naked. Visit those that are in prison. Do the things that Jesus Christ Himself said that we should be doing. There's a whole list of things in Matthew chapter 25 that we are to be doing to help those that are in need.

And there's there's so many churches, so many congregations now that do not do that. I said we don't have to open up our own houses as a Motel 6 for the homeless.

God doesn't expect that of us, but we are to do what we can with what we have. And we are not to hoard up all of our money. We're to use, we're to use our blessing to bless others is basically what it boils down to.

Behold the higher of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, cry, and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the years of the Lord of Sabaith.

Behold the higher of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is kept back by you by fraud, cry. So he's talking about these rich folks continuing on with them. He said, you've hired people.

[17:17] You've hired people to gather in your crops. You've got hired people to plant your crops. You've hired people to work your fields. You've hired people to do all these things that have made you rich.

Your crops and what you're selling in that process, that's what's made you rich and you've hired these people. He says, not only have you kept this back from them, but you've kept it back by fraud. Now something that's pretty important in this that we don't really, we do see in the English, but we overlook it in the English. It's easier seen in the original Greek it was written in says, behold the higher of the laborers who have reaped down your fields.

That word reaped, that's in the aorist. That's in the aorist tense. That means that it's done. It's final. You can't go back in time and take it back in other words. It's been done. There's nothing anybody can do about it.

That's the word reaped. Then when it continues, it says, which is all you kept back. Kept back is actually in the perfect tense. What does that mean? That means it's continual.

[18:28] Just like who's ever believed in him should not perish. That everlasting life, that word believe with is continual. It's present perfect tense. This word here for kept back that you used in the Greek. That's perfect tense.

It's continual. It says you're continually keeping this back by fraud. You kept it back continual. In other words, you've hired these people and you've promised them you've hired them for a day. You've hired them for two days, three days for a week. Folks, they weren't paid weekly and bi-weekly and monthly like we are now. They were paid by the day. You see this in the parable that Jesus spoke in the New Testament.

Jesus says that there was a man that had a vineyard and he went out and he hired somebody and he promised him a penny for the day. Then we see the hour shortened but the people were promised the same penny at the end of the day.

Folks, that was their wages for a day. They were paid at the end of the day. It was no different the Old Testament. It was no different from the Old Testament to the New Testament. There's specific laws that God spoke into existence, specific commandments that he gave, particularly in Leviticus not tain.

[19 : 39] He reiterated it in the book of Deuteronomy that you're not to hold back the wages of the labor. You're not to hold them back. You're to pay them what they're due, when they're due. James here is saying you've hired these people and you've continually kept back their wages.

That is part of the reason that you've got the riches that you do. In other words, the riches that you have were gained unjustly is what James is saying. Part of those riches are.

He says they've reaped down your fields which is all you've kept back by fraud. These people, the laborers, he says, cry. These laborers cry. Then the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaeth.

That's some pretty stern terminology that James is using there. The Lord of Sabaeth is the Lord of armies, the Lord of hosts that we read about so many times in the Old Testament.

In other words, God's got yours coming to you is what James is telling these rich folks here. He's saying these people, these laborers that you've hired and you've kept back their wages, by fraud you continually kept back their wages, they're crying and they're crying to the Lord.

[20 : 52] Now, your ears haven't heard that cries while he's telling these rich folks, but God has heard the cry of those people. And God is the Lord of hosts. This is very stern threatening terminology that James is using towards these rich folks.

And it should have made them shaking their boots. It really should have because once again, chapter one, he's writing to the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad. He was writing to Jews. They would have been familiar with who the Lord of Sabaeth was, who the Lord of armies, who the Lord of hosts was.

And they would have been familiar with that Levitical law. They would have been familiar with all these things that God had laid out for them over in the Old Testament. They would have known these things and yet they were willfully going against the commandment of God.

This should have made them, as I said, shaking their boots. Verse five, you have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanting. You have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

You have condemned and killed the just and he doth not resist you. So you have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanting. I mean, there's really no lines to read between there.

[22 : 03] Not a whole lot of explanation needed. You've lived in pleasure and been wanting.

Wanting basically means you've been wasteful with what you've had. You've lived in pleasure plus you've wasted.

And you've got these, now keep in mind the verse we read right before this about the laborers and how their wages have been kept back. And how they were crying to God. And now he says, you have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanting.

He says, you've been living sumptuously. You've been living as smiling Joe would say in your best life now. But he says, you've been wanting.

You've been wasteful. Not only wasteful, wanting also carries the implication that you've been willingly wasteful. You got something that could benefit someone else, but you would rather toss it out the window, throw it in the trash, or throw it in the river, let it float downstream as opposed to giving it to someone who could really use it.

That's the implication that's given with that word wanting there. You have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanting. You have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You've nourished your hearts.

[23 : 19] You haven't worried about these laborers. You haven't worried about those indeed. You haven't worried about the ones that have been out there in your fields, that have been playing your crops and gathering in your crops and taking care of your business, which has made you wealthy, which has made you able to live this life of pleasure that he's talking about here.

Instead, you've been wasteful with what you have. How many other folks in the scripture? There's one that pops in my head right off the bat. That's the prodigal son. We know that when he went to his father, he said, give me my part of the inheritance that the father gave it to him.

And what's the scripture teach? It teaches that he went out and he wasted it. He wasted it on water. I had us living. He was wanting with that.

He willfully wasted it. But we also know what happened with the prodigal son. We also know he wound up in the pigsty. He was going to rise and he finally rose up and said he'd go back to his father.

I understand that. That's great. But when did the prodigal rise up? What caused him? What caused him to understand his need? When he got hungry.

[24 : 31] When he got hungry, that's when he rose up. When he talks about how he's basically eating the same food that the pigs did, he got hungry.

That's what it's going to take. It's what it's going to take for saved people to get back in a good relationship with God. I know I'm getting off the track a little bit here with James, but that's okay. We've got to realize how hungry we are. We've got to quit depending on the things in the world. We've got to quit depending on our possessions. Just like James was talking about here with these rich folks in the congregation.

We're depending on too many things and not depending on Almighty God. We might thank God for those things and think that that's enough, but no. We should thank God for those things, but we cannot depend on the blessings themselves.

We depend on He who gave the blessing, on the blesser himself. Not the blessing, not the things, not the people, not the money, not the goods, nothing like that.

[25 : 36] Sometimes we've got to get hungry before we realize that we've left the Father's house and we really need to go back to Him. But anyway, that's just on the side.

You have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanting to nurse your heart as in a day of slaughter. You've taken care of yourselves and you've let these others that are doing your work go without.

You have condemned and killed the just and He does not resist you. I mean, you study Bibles or commentaries or anything like that. There's a small debate that goes on in the theological realm of who He just is here.

I think it's fairly evident that it's not Jesus Christ that's being spoken of here. While Jesus is referred to as the just one in Scripture, he's referred to as the just in Scripture.

But both of those times, it's also capitalized. Now that capitalization was done by the people who translated this into English text for us.

[26 : 40] But the context here and the context in the Greek doesn't support that. He's talking about you've condemned and killed the just and He does not resist you.

While that is true of Jesus Christ, they did condemn Him and they did kill Him. I mean, there are rich people, Pharisees, mainly all rich, Sadducees were rich.

The scribes and lawyers and all these people of the days of Jesus Christ, all these people that rose up to condemn Him, the chief priests, all of them had money.

And that's what a lot of people fall back on. That's what they think the Scripture is talking about. But that kind of yanks all that stuff out of context and it definitely yanks this out of context. He's talking about the rich people within a congregation of people that He is writing to here.

I mean, it's plural through most of this letter. Anywhere in the Scripture where you read the word ye, that's plural. He's talking to a group of people or the writer regardless of if it's Jane through anybody else.

[27 : 52] Ye is always plural. So it's addressing a group of people. But he says, ye have condemned and killed the just and He does not resist you. I said, that does apply to Christ because He was the just and He didn't resist.

Had He resisted, He would have never died. They couldn't have killed Him if He would have resisted. But He did resist. But He's talking about these laborers. They didn't have the power. They didn't have the means.

They didn't have a way to resist the rich. They could have physically resisted, yes. I'm not saying that they didn't. I mean, somebody comes to this church house right now and just say a group of people comes in here and tries to hold every one of us down with a dagger to our chest.

I guarantee there's going to be some resistance. We might not win that little fight. We might not win that struggle. But we're going to resist, yes. But the power that the rich folks had as far as themselves and their family and their money and whatever security they may have had, whatever extra servants they may have had that were to watch over the managers of the field as opposed to the laborers of the field, they would have had much more power.

They would have had much more means than the general laborers would have had. And He says, you have condemned and killed the just. You've condemned and killed these that didn't need to be condemned and killed.

[29 : 24] You brought false accusations against them. Basically, that's what James is saying. You remember James chapter 2? He actually says, speaking of the rich once again, he says, these are not the ones that draw you before the judgment seats.

These are the ones that have the power to influence the judges, influence the lawyers, influence the scribes and those that interpret the law. They have the money to shove underneath the table to these people to judge in your favor.

And here he says, you have condemned and killed the just, and he does not resist you. They can't resist because they're powerless to do so. And I said, they can physically resist for a while.

You get 10 people on one person, you get five people on one person. There's not going to be a resistance, but there's not going to be much of a fight, much of a struggle there. But even, I hate to say even worse than the killing though, is the condemnation.

I mean, both of them sinned and gone its eyes, yes. But just to bring some kind of rallying accusation against someone who is just, that sin in itself.

[30 : 38] Just to say, you know, well, I didn't pay you, and this is just a scenario out of my head, scripture doesn't say this, but the man that on this field could have been saying, I didn't pay you because I know you took two ears of corn.

Or I didn't pay you because I saw you napping over in the corner or whatever the case, anything he wanted to throw out there. And this person could have been completely and totally innocent of stealing anything out of the field or napping while they're on the job.

But that's just as condemning as anything else that you can think of. Because it tarnishes that person's reputation. It tarnishes the way people think about them.

And all these other things could have happened here. I'm just saying these are good. I'm not saying this is what James is saying happened. These are very good possibilities of things that could have happened.

Either way, they condemned them, though, and they killed the just, and he does not resist you. And that brings us to the end of this little passage here, the first six verses.

[31 : 47] We've got about 15 minutes left, but I would not get as far in the next passages as I would like to if we continued on. So I will say, does anybody have any questions or comments?

Anything at all? All right. When you were talking about how we were rich in this nation compared to other places in the world, they just brought some things back to my recollection.

Any of the things that happened yesterday, we had a yard sale yesterday at our home. And I had made a post on Facebook about free bibles that I had taken, said that I was giving out free bibles if anybody needed a Bible to come on over and I'd make sure they'd gone to Bible.

And there are people around the world who search the Internet for post, like I made yesterday. And that post drew three responses from Africa of people meeting bibles.

Right. And it just goes to illustrate the point I think that you were making earlier about how it just seems like so often we do take it for granted in this part of the world that we are so much richer than in other places of the world.

[33 : 18] Like you said, there are places in the world who look at what we consider poverty and they'll think that that's rich. Right. And I had heard a statistic years ago and I think it went something like this.

If you have a roof of your head and indoor plumbing, you might be in the top 7% of the richest people in the world.

That may not be exactly right, but we need to pray for those people. We've tried here in the past, shipping bibles overseas to people who were in need.

It seems like we've had trouble with bibles not arriving to where they're supposed to be. And it's very expensive to ship bibles overseas. And even if you get the tracking and everything, that doesn't guarantee that they can get where they're supposed to be.

But I thought about that. And those people, like I said, I got three responses yesterday. Just people who were evidently searching the Internet. Somehow I don't know how they've got access to the Internet, but somehow they do.

[34 : 24] Maybe one person in a big group has them and they're looking for models. And one said that they had over 100 people in their group and they just didn't have models.

So yeah, that's true. We need to be much in progress. I've seen a bread and actually heard other missionaries talk about how they'll go into certain buildings in certain parts of the world.

Some of them as close as South America. We might say, well, that's not really that close. Well, yeah, it is. We want to hear the ocean that separates us in South America as there is us in Africa. But I'm talking Brazil, Peru, places like that, where you go in these little villages, where these people are, and they'll have had one or maybe two Bibles and they'll literally tear the pages out of the Bible and memorize the front and the back page regardless of if it makes sense or not.

But they'll memorize it and then they'll swap them to the next cut. And whatever the next cut has, they can give it to them and they will trade these pages in the Bible that are written in their own language around this village, this community that they're in.

[35 : 44] Simply because they don't have a full Bible. I said they might have one or two and generally there's a pastor in that community and he's got one to himself.

But the rest of them, they have to swap pages of a Bible. And I've heard about that in more than one place that happened, particularly in South America, in a couple places in Africa.

These people, they tear up pages in the Bible and I've actually read accounts. They'll tear out a page and if it's in a two column format, which most of our Bibles are, if it's not in a reader-friendly format, it's in two columns.

But then they'll split the page and they'll actually tear it in strips. So they just go to one trip and they'll just pass these things around to each other and they'll trade them. Once somebody's got it memorized from back, they'll trade it with somebody else so they can memorize another little snippet of scripture.

And you know, here we are, these people are doing their best to memorize what little bit that they can from what few snippets of scripture that they have.

[36 : 53] And we lay around with multiple Bibles in our presence and they'll put forth near that effort to do what their folks are ashamed of. Shame on me, not ashamed on me for it.

But anybody else got anything? Alright, God bless y'all, I appreciate your attention. Thank you.