

PM James 5

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[0:00] Once again to James chapter 5, the letter of James again, and we will look at chapter 5 this evening.

! Page 1, 2, 1, 8 in your pew Bibles if you're using them.

James chapter 5, I'll read the entire chapter. Hear the Word of God. 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 treasures in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mow your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you.

[1:05] 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 patterned your hearts in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you. Be patient, therefore, brothers, unto the coming of the Lord.

See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth. Be patient about it until it receives the early and 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.

[2:09] You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth, or by any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick?

Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And a prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.

The prayer of the righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.

[3:26] Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.

Amen. May the Lord add his blessing to the public reading of his holy and inspired word. In all throughout history, James addressed all the various issues.

It's a very highly practical work, as I mentioned. But like I said this morning, he's not teaching anything new. His wisdom, or his teaching, can be summed up from two sources, or at least that's what some of the experts say.

Mainly it's from the teaching of Christ, concerning life in the kingdom of God, especially when you think about the Sermon on the Mount, and how Christians ought to live in the kingdom of God in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And then the second source of his material, or his wisdom, his teaching, is taken from Proverbs, the book of Proverbs. And so, I won't go into the details, but there are various either quotations from Proverbs, or allusions from the Proverbs, the book of Proverbs, in his letter.

[5:07] And in essence, his letter is teaching how we can live in light of Jesus' summary of the law, to love God, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

That is kind of his teaching, in essence. To be truly wise, to be truly wise, we ought to live according to the summary of the law, according to Jesus, to love God, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. And so, when we come to chapter 5, chapter 5 is described by some as the life of a living faith. The life of a living faith. What does a living faith look like?

If we call ourselves Christians, then we ought to have a living faith. Yeah, we are not having a dead faith. As James discussed that in his own letter, the difference between faith and works, and I wouldn't go into all the theological debate over that.

Faith without works is dead. You can read all that in chapter 2. There is a difference there. A living faith, and a dead faith. A faith that causes us to live a different life, a life of desire to follow after Christ, and to seek after Christ with all a heart, mind, soul, and strength.

[6:44] And as opposed to a dead faith, which just says, I believe in God, and I just don't do anything after that. There is a big difference there. And so, chapter 5 is all about the life of a living faith.

And he is going to start off by addressing the rich. Now, there is nothing wrong with being rich. There is nothing wrong with riches, per se. But, it is about how a person with a living faith ought to live in light of, despite having the riches that he or she possesses.

And if one is rich by abusing the people working for for you, then, that's when the problem starts.

And so, warning to the rich is what we see at the beginning of this chapter 5.

And then, the next few verses in chapter 7 to 12 is all about patience in suffering. And not just patience in suffering, but patience at affliction will be eventually rewarded.

Okay, there is patience in suffering, but this patience in suffering will lead to a reward. if not in this life, it may be in the life to come. And so, there is patience in suffering in the next part and then the final part is the prayer of faith.

[8:05] See, this is all about the life of a living faith. A life of a living faith. And so, when we come to chapter 5 in verse 8, in that section about patience in suffering, we read this verse in verse 8, you also be patient.

Establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Interesting why he starts, this verse he starts with you also be patient. In fact, you look at verse 7, the verse before that, be patient therefore brothers unto the coming of the Lord.

So, it's almost like he's repeating himself. I suppose that he's being a good teacher to repeat oneself over and over again until the hearers get it. So, maybe that's what James is doing there. be patient, you also be patient. Why be patient? Is it perhaps because Christians, even us, if we call ourselves Christians, maybe we do lack patience.

Are we the sort of people to lack patience? You know, it's, we know that there are problems when we lose our patience.

[9:19] patience. You know what it's like if we lose our patience with somebody, perhaps with our loved ones, we become perhaps irritable, hard to live with, awkward.

James says here, you also be patient. Perhaps when we lose our patience, perhaps we start to lose focus.

now this is nothing new here. In the Old Testament, you may remember in 1 Samuel chapter 13, you remember King Saul, you remember he's supposed to wait for Samuel for the appointed time when Samuel is meant to, as the prophet, he's meant to conduct the sacrifice at the appointed time, and Saul, King Saul, waited for seven days, realized that Samuel wasn't around, he didn't come in time, and so Saul said, well, bring the burnt offering here, and I will, and he offered up, as king, which he's not supposed to, he offered up the burnt offerings, and then after he offered the burnt offerings, Samuel turned up, and Samuel said, this is, you can reorder in 1 Samuel chapter 13, Samuel said, what have you done?

And Saul said, well, the people are scattering, you are not here, and so what did I do? I offered up the sacrifice, and Samuel said to Saul, you have done foolishly, you lost patience, you were losing patience, I didn't turn up, you lost patience, you decided to go ahead and do something which

you're not meant to do, and so what's the conclusion to that?

But now your kingdom shall not continue, in fact, that was the turning point in King Saul's life, the Lord has sought after man after his own heart, and we know that's going to be David.

[11:21] So you see, losing patience means losing focus, losing patience means losing focus, or perhaps James said, be patient, you also be patient, perhaps it's not just about losing patience, losing focus, but perhaps it could be a lack of preparation on our parts.

Be patient, perhaps because we are not prepared, we're not prepared for what is going to come, because don't forget, this verse, as with the preceding verse, in verse 7, be patient therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.

And evidently this is about the second coming of Christ. And in verse 8, you also be patient, establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Now, that reminder could be because we lack our own preparation.

Jesus at the Mount Olives, he delivered that sermon which is also known as the Olivet Discourse. he said repeatedly in Matthew 24 and 25, I counted three times, three occasions where he said, watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. In chapter 25, verse 13, we read, watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

[13:03] Three times, three occasions, Jesus told his disciples, watch, watch, for you do not know when I'll be returning. And perhaps this is a reminder for us that James is reminding us, you be patient for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

That's a good reminder for us, perhaps a good warning for us, if we are not prepared. So, just a few thoughts there, why be patient?

Perhaps we are losing our patience, perhaps we are losing our focus because of that, perhaps we are not prepared.

And so, James is reminding us about that. But then, we come to the next part, establish your hearts. I must admit, I do love that phrase, establish your hearts.

hearts. I know, I think NIV, some of the modern translations, they put the two phrase together, be patient and stand firm. Be patient and stand firm.

[14:15] I think it's better to deal with these two issues separately. Be patient is one item, and establish your hearts.

Standing firm, well, maybe the idea is there, I personally prefer establish your hearts. ESV uses that, the King James and the New King James also uses that phrase, establish your hearts.

What do we mean? What does James meant by saying establish your hearts? Well, the idea there, according to various commentators, the idea there is one of bolstering up or holding up.

The picture there is that of Moses in Exodus 17. If you remember what happened during the battles, a particular battle, Moses' hands grew weary, and he's meant to raise up his hands, and as he raised up his hands, the Israelites had the upper hand against the enemy, but as his hands grew weary, and it started to sink, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side and the other on the other side.

So his hands were steady until going down the sun. And that is the picture that we have there with establishing your hearts. Moses had to be strengthened, his hands had to be raised up, bolstered up, in order for the battle to be won.

[16:03] So the idea is there of strengthening, strengthening, confirming. Perhaps that's why the NIV has stand firm. It's a bit more than that, but it's to strengthen, to be resolved that we are going to do it in this way.

we're certain, confirmed, strengthened, to establish your hearts. Thomas Manton, who I've mentioned before, his commentary on James is pretty good.

He's a Puritan, and there's lots that we can learn from them, the Puritans. And Thomas Manton wrote, it implies two things, firmness of faith, and constancy in grace.

Firmness of faith, and constancy in grace. So basically, Manton is showing us, it's basically a two-pronged activity for all believers.

If we're believers in Christ, then we need to establish our hearts, which means this two-pronged activity, firmness of faith, constancy in grace. We'll look at both firmness of faith and constancy in grace in a bit more detail.

[17:26] Firmness of faith, that's about trust. That's about encouragement in times of trouble. That is when we can sit down under God's will and in his good pleasure.

we can be, we can, as we, you know, we know that with Christ in a vessel, you can smile at a storm. You may sing that in your Sunday school days.

With Christ in a vessel, we can smile at a storm. We can be confident. We can be resolved that the Lord is with us. And we can trust that despite the troubles that we face, the Lord is with us.

And you know, that's what the upright, the righteous, the good man is meant to be, a good man or good woman. In the Psalm, Psalm 112, verse 8, we read, his heart is established.

See that? His heart is established. He will not be afraid. See that? Until he sees his desire upon his enemies, or until he looks in triumph over his enemies.

[18:39] You see that? His heart is established. establish your hearts. Same idea there. He will not be afraid until he sees, until he looks in triumph over his enemies.

So, like I say, James is not saying anything unusual, nothing novel about it. He's just taken Psalm 112 and kind of put his own angle on it.

Now, these troubles, times of troubles, can be hard providence, difficult times, difficult times. And when we face difficult times, the more we need to be firm in our faith.

what Manton describes as holy hardness. Not holy hardness in a bad sense, but holy hardness in the sense of firm in our faith.

And again, I quote him, there's a holy obstinacy and hardness of heart that is nothing but a firmness in our Christian purposes and resolutions.

[19:56] You see that? We need this in these times. These, there are persecutions and troubles. We need to be resolved, we need to know the goals, we need to know our Christian purpose in life.

That is holy hardness. Nothing bad about this. We need this because there will be persecutions and troubles. You know, perhaps we may be, we may have a very easy life and there's nothing wrong having an easy life.

There's, there's, when we have an easy life, we ought to be prepared for the difficult times. But when things are going very easy for us, when we are sailing through life, we have no care in the world, perhaps we may be unwittingly neglecting the point of establishing our hearts, especially in firming our faith.

You know, when things are going well, and we neglect establishing our hearts, what sometimes might happen is we tend to drift around.

Which is why the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4 warns against those who are following after false teachings, because they are tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

[21:42] There's a danger there when everything is all going smooth sailing that we forget to establish our hearts, we forget to strengthen our faith, and we just end up tossing to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

Every false idea that comes on the scene, we just go along with it. I was in Singapore last month, and I was talking to some of my friends from my childhood days, and one of them mentioned to me a very prominent Singapore pastor, and some of you may have heard of him, because he's on TV, even over here, a guy named Joseph Prince, one of those health and wealth preachers, and he's very appealing, very trendy, very appealing, and the people who like him, they like him because he's very easy going, his Christian faith, or what he's promoting, is not about preparing to establish your hearts, preparing for the difficult times, it's all about, oh, just give me the money, and you have everything you want in life, and it's all just smooth sailing, you don't have to, there's not really, nothing to strive through the narrow gate, it's all very plain sailing, very smooth sailing, and so people just follow him, they like him, his congregation is in the thousands, what's going on in your hearts,

I do not know, but he is the sort of preacher, nothing about establishing your hearts, what we have to establish our hearts, firmness of faith, a holy heartness, resolve in our hearts, we know this is what the Christian life is all about, we follow after Christ, there will be sacrifices we need to make, some pet sins must go to death, must be put to death, some Christian graces need to be cultivated, and all that can be painful at times, but it is much needed, that is part of establishing our hearts, and as I mentioned earlier, when it comes to if we are in that period in our lives where things are going a bit smoother, and we are not facing much troubles, nothing wrong with that, like I said, but perhaps

it's time that we need to prepare ourselves, we need to prepare ourselves for the challenging times and the challenging days ahead of us, and so we can, so perhaps we need to ask ourselves, do we, are we establishing our hearts now?

Are we storing up in our lives something about God? in the quieter times?

Are we prepared for the challenging times ahead of us? Are we doing that? Or are we just drifting along, coasting along?

[25 : 07] What we see here, you also be patient, establish your hearts, establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. We touch on the last part in a few minutes' time.

Next, we can think about, as I mentioned, Thomas Manton said about the firmness of faith and the constancy in grace. Constancy in grace.

This is about not collapsing in our times of trouble or sorrows, or worse still, to walk away from the faith. Constancy in grace is not collapsing during our times of troubles, and we do face troubles.

If you and I are honest about it, we do face times of troubles and times of sorrows. We should not collapse under that, or worse still, walk away from the faith.

I've already mentioned, this is about not being impatient. Perhaps you and I have been praying for a certain issue, and God is not answering our prayer. We can become impatient.

[26 : 19] You and I know this. We can become impatient with God. God, why are you not answering my prayer? I pray daily about this particular issue, but you're not answering my prayer. Why?

Why? Why? Why? I've already mentioned earlier about King Saul's mistake in thinking that he knew better, and he went ahead in impatience, and that cost him a kingdom.

cost him his kingdom. Troubles can also be, can come in the form of sin, sadly.

sin can bring us down. Now, you know it, and I know it. Constancy in grace doesn't mean that sin will bring us down, and we stay down.

No, constancy in grace means when sin brings us down, we seek the Lord's forgiveness. And I've got proof on that. Psalm 65, verse 3 and 4.

[27 : 22] Iniquities, sins, prevail against me. As for our transgressions, you will provide atonement for them. Blessed is the man you choose and cause to approach you, that he may dwell in your courts.

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, of your holy temple. See there? You see there? Iniquities, or sin, prevail against me.

Yes, sin can bring us down. It can prevail against us. Yes. You know it, and I know it. As for our transgression, you will provide atonement for them.

God will provide the atonement, and we know that this atonement is through the Lord Jesus Christ, who came and died for sin and for sinners, and he rose from the dead so that we can be right with him.

We can be right with God. Blessed is the man that you choose and cause to approach you. Why? That he may dwell in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, of your holy temple.

[28 : 34] You see, when we are afflicted by sin, and then we are delivered by the grace of God, God provides the atonement in Jesus, and then what? It doesn't mean that once we are forgiven, once he's provided the atonement in Christ, that's it.

Adios, be on your way, all the best, and I'll see you in eternity. No. We are established in God's house. He wants to see us in his house.

That the person may dwell in the courts of God. We are established in God's house. That's what the church of Jesus Christ is all about.

We're not here about taking attendance, taking a box. When we come to church, when we come to the Lord's house, we are doing that because our sins have been forgiven and we want to be in the Lord's house.

While horses cannot draw us away from the Lord's house, we want to be satisfied with the goodness of his house, God's house. grace. That is establishing our faith.

[29 : 44] That is establishing our hearts. Constancy in grace. Samuel Rutherford says that grace grows best in the winter.

I'm sure you heard that saying before. Grace grows best in the winter. The winter can be the winter of sin, can be the winter of troubles, can be the winter of sorrows.

Grace grows best in such conditions. You know, again elsewhere, Peter himself, 1 Peter chapter 5, he said this, but may the God of all grace, see here, the God of all grace, who call us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, see there again, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you, see there, the same thing, when the God of all grace, who has drawn us by Jesus Christ, unto himself, after we have suffered, after we are suffering for whatever, whatever situation we're in, he will perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle us.

Constancy in grace. That's how we are established in our hearts. The times of, as I mentioned earlier, when the times of calm, and the times of quietness, is a time we ought to be prepared for the difficult times ahead.

It's all about preparation. It's all about preparation, it's all about being patient. You know, if you remember Genesis chapter 41, you remember the dream of Pharaoh, the double dreams of Pharaoh, and he needed Joseph to advise him about his double dreams in Genesis 41, and you remember the dream is about, you can read all that in Genesis 41, but the advice from Joseph is very simple.

[32:02] In your fruitful years, tax 20% on all the produce of your nation, of the nation of Egypt. Tax 20% on all the produce, but this is to be stored up.

The grain and the produce is meant to be stored up. Why? Because there's going to be seven lean years, and during these seven lean years, when you're not able to grow anything, use your stores. Use the grain from your stores. I think that's a good principle, but certainly it was good enough for Pharaoh, for he did that, and it's a lesson there for us. When we're in the times of a period of goodness, and in a period of kind providences from the Lord, everything is going well, and what a great blessing when that happens, that is time we need to establish our hearts, store up God's goodness in our hearts, write them down if need be.

There's this thing called journaling, where you can write all these thoughts down of how God has been so good to you in your times of goodness. Pray without ceasing, pray with thanksgiving.

These are the times we store up these good things, things, because the seven lean years will come. The seven lean years will come, and when that happens, we can have a store of knowing God's goodness, we can lean on that, we can trust that the Lord knows best.

[33:36] Even in the animal kingdom, we see that as well. Apparently, according to ecologists, ants, the kind of things that we are all afraid of in our house, ants are known to change their diet, apparently, in the autumn months, in order to prepare for the winter, the cold winters.

So what the ants would do is over the course of spring, summer, to autumn, they'll change their diet so that in the autumn months, they'll start foraging for and start eating high-calorie meals in order to build up fat reserves for the winter.

How amazing is that? How amazing is that? That even ants, they know how to prepare. In the good times, they'll prepare in preparation for the difficult times, the cold winters.

Now, surely, we ought to know better. We who are created in the image and likeness of God, we ought to know better. Are we the sort of people who store up God's goodness in our hearts?

Do we say like the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Jesus Christ for you? Do we do that? Do we give thanks?

[34:56] And I don't know, Paul is not saying about giving thanks in terms of giving thanks to your food before your meals. It's a bit more than that, obviously. But do we in everything give thanks?

Or do we, like Paul writing to the Philippians, be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

Let your request be known to God. Do we do that? Because these are the kind of things that will help us establish our hearts. and I don't need to give any proof on that because in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

You want to know what is God's will for your life? Well, let's go with the simple things. In everything give thanks. Do we do that? Do we do that? When we do that, well, that's how we establish our hearts.

Constancy in grace. But now we come to the third part and that is the reason for why we need to establish our hearts. And that's the third part in this verse, verse 8.

[36:09] For the coming of the Lord is at hand. Interesting that he says that. Interesting that the reason for establishing our hearts is not because one day we will die.

You see that he didn't say that. Establish your hearts now because there will be one day where it will just come to an end and that's the end of it. You will die, you will be buried and that's it. No, James didn't say that.

James said establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. One day Jesus will return again. One day he will bring about a general judgment on all of mankind.

time. That's why I said at the beginning that why be patient? There's numerous instructions by Jesus to his disciples.

Watch therefore for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. And again we see here in this verse establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. We tend to look at our lives based on the 70, 80, 90 years, 100 years of age of lifespan.

[37 : 29] We tend to look at it and there's nothing wrong with that because that's what we are wired to look at things. We don't look at it in terms of eternity. We don't look at it in terms of when the Lord is coming back for we don't know when that will happen.

So we tend to look at our lives from the point we are born to the point we end up in the grave. Now there are those in politics who are trying to tell us when the world will come to an end.

We see in the news practically on a daily basis about how the earth will come to an end via climate change, rising ocean levels.

There's the whole 2030 climate deadline. That already gives a lot of warning. Alarm bells. Climate deadline. By 2030 we don't meet those targets, that's the end.

Point of no returns. What they say? 2050 net zero benchmark. If we don't meet those benchmarks by 2050, that's the end. That is a point of no return.

[38 : 35] That's what they're saying. And that caused an unnecessary climate anxiety. when it comes to God, in his timing, there's nothing.

2 Peter 3, we read that, but beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

In God's timing, 2030, 2050 means nothing to him. It means very little to him. It may mean a lot to us, or for some of us, and we get over anxious about it, but in the eyes of God, he's far more relaxed than we are.

You know, in the Old Testament, we read that there's going to be 2,000 years between the calling of the Gentiles from Isaiah.

He's going to prophesy in Isaiah 54 that there's going to be a calling of the Gentiles into the church. And he prophesied 700 years before Christ, and Christ came, and then the church of Jesus Christ was established.

[40 : 01] And Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 54, God said through Isaiah, for a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you.

Can you imagine that Isaiah is going to say, for a brief moment I deserted you, and how many years is going to happen before this thing is established? 700 years before Christ came.

But with great compassion I will gather you. You know, when it comes to eternity, and when it comes to the Lord's second coming, ultimately that's all that matters.

When we establish our hearts, it's because we know that one day, what is going to be sure and certain is not 2030, is not 2050, there is no point or no return sort of thing, but we know that there will be a day that the Lord is coming back.

and when he comes back, eternity is going to be set in place and we are going to see that. And ultimately that's all that matters.

[41 : 12] That's all that matters. The Lord is coming again and we read in 2 Peter that the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient towards you.

And maybe that's what Christ is doing to us. He's being very patient with us. He's being very patient with us. He's telling us now from his word before the coming of Christ you and I we need to be patient and we need to establish our hearts firm up our faith constancy in grace that is what is needed for us in this day and age.

So just a few thoughts from James chapter 5 verse 8 especially this phrase establish your hearts how important is it for us to do so. Amen and may the Lord