

Introduction:

CTS: Patiently endure suffering as you await the return of the Lord, the righteous Judge.

I. Do not Envy the Fortunes of the Rich (1-6).

Context:

- The rich that James addresses are wealthy landowners, known for their greedy acquisition of land and exploitation of those who worked for them. They are not followers of Christ but are oppressing the Christian Community.
- “Weep and howl” is prophetic language for those under indictment by God when the day of the Lord arrives (Isa 13:6; 15:3; Hos 7:14; Amos 8:3).
- This language is similar to the language depicted in the OT prophets concerning the reaction of the wicked when the day of the Lord arrives.
- James is referring to the miseries not of this life but those at the judgment when Christ returns.
- Clarification:
 - James is not condemning the “rich” in a general, all-inclusive sense.
 - Rather, he is condemning their sinful use of wealth. Thus, this passage can’t just be applied to all wealthy people.
 - Yet, it wasn’t for nothing that Jesus warned, “I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 19:23).
- Why does James include this condemnation of rich non-Christians in this letter to the church? Calvin suggests two reasons:
 - First, that the faithful believers might hear the miserable end of the rich and not envy their fortune.
 - Second, knowing that God would be the avenger of the wrongs they suffered might help to be better to patiently bear them.

a. They hoard wealth (2-3).

- i. Why is it not wise to hoard wealth?
- ii. Wealth will always be lost. You will either lose them while on earth or you will lose them when you die. There are no exceptions.
- iii. Possessions can rot, be eaten by moths, destroyed by fire, rust/corrode (decay) and be stolen.
 1. Take a mental road trip to the junkyard, which is the final resting place for things in our lives.
 2. He who die’s with the most toys does not win. That is a complete tragedy.
- iv. People who hoard are not only practicing bad priorities, they are depriving others from life. They should have been using their wealth to help others.
- v. At the heart of much of our pursuit of riches is lack of faith in God. Hoarding is a means of replacing God. “If I have enough I won’t need God.”
- vi. Pray: “Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders.”
- vii. Hoarding and the return of Christ
 1. Wealth not only doesn’t bring any lasting benefit, it stands as a witness against them.
 2. The rich are especially foolish because they are hoarding wealth in the “last days.” The “last days” should not be an impetus to hoard wealth, but rather to share our wealth with others.

- b. They defraud others (4).**
 - i. They cheated their field workers and harvesters
 - ii. Ills: Cable salesman convo from this past week: just lie to get out of your contract.

- c. They live in self-indulgence (5).**

- d. They oppress the righteous (6).**
 - i. They condemned and killed righteous people
 - ii. The “righteous one” is the follower of God, experience persecution by the rich. By taking away their gainful employment, the poor starve to death.
 - iii. “He does not resist you” – this focuses on the poor who refuse, or are unable to, oppose the power and influence of the rich.
 - iv. When money becomes your god you will do whatever it takes to get it (ref. James 4:1 ff.).

- e. The rich will face the righteous judgment of God**
 - i. The rich think that their dealings are in secret but nothing is hidden from the Lord.
 - ii. Your use of money “will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire” (3).
 - iii. “...have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts” (4).
 - 1. James doesn’t just reveal that God knows these sinful dealings, he makes sure the people know that God is holy, powerful and determined to judge those whom have broke his commands.
 - iv. “...the day of slaughter” (5).
 - 1. The “day of slaughter” is a description of the day of judgment. “James’s point then, as in v. 3, is that the rich are selfishly and ignorantly going about accumulating wealth for themselves and wastefully spending it on their own pleasure in the very day when God’s judgment is imminently threatened. The ‘last days’ have already begun; the judgment *could* break in at any time – yet the rich, instead of acting to avoid that judgment, are, by their selfish indulgence, incurring greater guilt. They are like cattle being fattened for the kill” (Moo).
 - 2. One day there will be a great reversal...the rich will face judgment while the poor and oppressed thrive.
 - v. In other words, as they store up treasure they are also storing up wrath for the day of judgment.

- f. Some final encouragements on money**
 - i. “We may try to divorce our faith and our finances, but God sees them as inseparable” (Randy Alcorn).
 - ii. “Stewardship of material possessions is the most important test-case of one’s profession of discipleship” (Craig Blomberg, NT Scholar).
 - iii. Matthew 6:19-21

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

- iv. The treasure principle: “You can’t take it with you—but you can send it on ahead” (Alcorn).
- v. Don’t live for the dot but for the line (Alcorn)
- vi. How do you want Jesus to find you when he returns?
- vii. Your heart will follow where you put your money (Alcorn)
- viii. Therefore, giving is the only antidote to materialism (Alcorn)
- ix. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”

g. A few practical suggestions:

- i. Give first save second, spend last.
- ii. Examples: supporting our Toronto team; upcoming India trip (\$3000); our adoption.
- iii. Teaser for upcoming money series

II. Endure Suffering with Patience (7-11).

a. Patience

- i. We are to adopt an attitude of patience in the midst of suffering that includes an expectation that one day the fortunes of this life will be reversed.

b. You can endure suffering with patience because Christ is returning soon

- i. The final age of salvation has been inaugurated though we don’t know how long this period of time will be.
- ii. “Every generation of Christians lives (or should live!) with the consciousness that the *parousia* could occur at any time and that one needs to make decisions and choose values based on that realization. So it was true in James’s day as it is in ours: we need to *be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near*” (Moo).
- iii. He will save and deliver the righteous
 - 1. See James 4:12
- iv. He will judge and punish the wicked
 - 1. Do not grumble (9).
 - a. This is a particular temptation when we all face trials.
 - 2. This implicitly forbids believers from taking vengeance on their oppressors. Romans 12:17-21:
 - 3.

“Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

- c. Three examples: in your difficult circumstances, display patience, imitating**
- i. The farmer (7).
 1. The autumn rains occur just after sowing (Oct/Nov) and the spring rains just before the harvest (Mar/Apr).
 2. Just as the farmers waited patiently between the early rains and the later rains for their crops to ripen, Christians should wait with patience in between the Lord's first coming (incarnation) and his return (final judgment).
 - ii. The prophets (10).
 1. James doesn't tell us which prophets (Heb 11:32-38; Jeremiah; Isaiah).
 2. James suggests that doing God's will often results in suffering.
 3. We need to learn this: we are to wait patiently as we endure suffering but this does not mean that we cannot speak out against evil.
 - iii. Job (11).
 1. Blessed are those who remain steadfast.
 2. The Lord always has a purpose (see James 1:1-2, 12).
 3. Though Job did complain, he never abandoned his faith. The Lord also bought restoration and blessing to Job. The Lord is full of mercy and compassion.
 4. "Your present suffering, James would be saying, is not the 'end' of the story; God will transform your situation for God when Christ is revealed in glory" (Moo).

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12 ESV)

"Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:8 ESV)

III. Be Trustworthy in what you Say (12).

- a. Oaths were allowed but the person was required to fulfill them. These oaths often involved invoking the name of the Lord.
- b. "...our truthfulness should be so consistent and dependable that we need no oath to support it: a simple 'yes' or 'no' should suffice. 'Our mere word should be as utterly trustworthy as a signed document, legally correct and complete'" (Moo, quoting C. L. Mitton).
- c. The point: one's word should be enough.
- d. This does not mean that all oaths are prohibited (cf. Rom 1:9; 2 Cor 1:23; Phil 1:8).