

DEVOTIONALS FOR JAMES 5

AWAITING THE RICH

*Come now, you rich, weep and howl
for the miseries that are coming upon you.*

JAMES 5:1

This chapter begins with one sharp condemnation. It feels like a talk-down to a disobedient son who has just wronged his father.

But let's agree: we've all dreamed of the vanities of wealth. Some of us have intentionally pursued this path, either successfully and unsuccessfully. After reading this our dreams of vanity might be better off unrealized, for it appears that the rich will soon experience a nightmare that results in weeping and howling. So don't let your vain pursuit of dreams of wealth pursue you.

ASK THIS: What are you pursuing?

DO THIS: Make your pursuit holy, and pursue God with all you have, even your money.

PRAY THIS: God, purify my heart and my every pursuit this year.

A STAMPEDE OF JUDGMENT

You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

JAMES 5:6

Truly righteous followers are patient in suffering. Case in point: Jesus Christ.

I have to admit there are moments when I experience acts of condemnation by others that something wells up in me. This thing within me is not good and not righteous. Therefore I am ready with a defensive response—ready to rise up. Yet James, in his day, watched as his people experienced oppression, and even murder, by the hands of oppressors. Many of the oppressed did not resist these evil acts. They were like *“a lamb that is led to the slaughter.”*

So today, you may encounter an oppressor. It could be right for you to speak out and stand up and do this righteously. But there is a second possibility, that God may want you to resist not the wrongdoer. But either way, know this—God’s judgment is coming! It’s coming like a stampede that will not be stopped and his righteousness will win out over every act of unrighteousness you have endured.

JAMES

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers are silent, so he opened not his mouth.

ISAIAH 53:7

ASK THIS: What's right for you to do today—resist or resist not?

DO THIS: Act rightly with an eye to God's pending judgment.

PRAY THIS: God, may my thoughts, speech, and action reflect your righteousness in light of your judgment.

ESTABLISHED IN PATIENCE

*You also, be patient. Establish your hearts,
for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

JAMES 5:8

Most of us know that patience is an output of living a life guided by the Holy Spirit. However, there are also times when biblical writers command us to cooperate with the Spirit's promptings toward patience. James is telling us to give some attention to our impatient emotions by being patient. And we all know (given the world we are living in today) that commanding our fleshly desires to submit to the Holy Spirit may be the needed action. Could today be that day for you? Is today a day when your flesh may want something faster than it appears God is providing? If so, command your flesh to submit to God's Spirit, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Take that flesh!

ASK THIS: Is your flesh impatient?

DO THIS: Let God's Spirit, not your spirit, reign in you!

PRAY THIS: God, reign in me with all your power. Bring heaven down and drive the world out of me!

HE'S AT THE DOOR

*Do not grumble against one another,
brothers, so that you may not be judged;
behold, the Judge is standing at the door.*

JAMES 5:9

One thing's for sure; the judgment that awaits us all has a righteous, holy, and just Judge. His presence begets power and authority, and our meeting with the Judge is imminent. He does not act like the judges, politicians, and leaders of our time who merely grumble against one another, debating endlessly about who is right or wrong. While we love to convince ourselves we are more in the right compared with others, we must confront this truth, *"there is no one righteous, no not one."* — *Romans 3:10*

Today is the day to be prepared. He's at the door. He's standing at the ready. So believe, be baptized, and be saved.

*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but
whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

MARK 16:16

ASK THIS: Are you ready?

DO THIS: Believe and be baptized.

THREE ACTIONS OF GREAT FOLLOWERS

PRAY THIS: God, I confess all my unrighteousness. I accept today your grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness. Cleanse me of all unrighteousness. Until your imminent return, I cling to you as the just Judge and follow you as the Lord and Savior of my life. Amen.

IT'S TIME FOR PROPHETS

As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

JAMES 5:10

We live in a time of suffering: physical, economic, social, and political suffering. This is not real suffering. Real suffering is to suffer for a truly virtuous cause, a cause as high as the Lord himself.

Our time of suffering is here. It's time to speak. We need to speak boldly in the name of the Lord. Do not back down. There is no better suffering than to suffer like the prophets of the old.

ASK THIS: Are you prepared to suffer?

DO THIS: Hold fast to the Word of God.

PRAY THIS: God, I trust you. I am patient. I am willing. Please give me a platform from which to speak and the words to say.

FIND HEALING

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.

JAMES 5:14

At some point, we realize that only God can heal. Yet with the advancement of medicine and technology we have come to trust more in human ingenuity than a God who heals. While I deeply appreciate the care and devotion of my friends who are physicians, they are merely humans with human solutions manipulating the body, hoping that it will heal. However, God created us. He is the Great Physician—he possesses healing power.

The simplicity of James' teaching is profound. If you are sick, turn to God. But the way we do it is important. The command is to *"call for the elders of the church."*

There is a divine and supernatural ministry we need today. The narrative of our time is indoctrinating us with its solutions, security, and salvation. We must not let these narratives replace divine and supernatural ministry that is only accomplished by being in the presence of one another and through the power of prayer.

JAMES

ASK THIS: Do you need healing?

DO THIS: Ask another follower and your church to pray for you.

PRAY THIS: God, deafen my ears to the narratives of this time. Open my ears to the convictions and guidance of your word. And then give me the courage to act in obedience when it looks like foolishness to the world.

THE POWERFUL PRAYERS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

JAMES 5:16

We live in a twisted world, one that is more rapidly becoming divided by sin. But what we are experiencing can be healed. It is healed through confession and prayer of a righteous person. Brothers acting in rebellion to sin with more sin is not the answer. But a righteous follower can usher in a time of healing. It begins with a confession of sin and prayer. And let this work, for the prayer of the person who is right with God has great power.

ASK THIS: What do you need to confess?

DO THIS: Confess and let someone pray for you. Start a healing movement!

PRAY THIS: God, I confess my sin of selfishness. Heal me. Heal our land.

HOW TO STOP THE PROGRESS OF SIN

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.

JAMES 5:19-20

People are wandering. They are wandering because their world has been turned upside down by marriage failures, job losses, sicknesses, addictions, and all kinds of oppression. While it is tragic, it is an opportunity for souls to be brought back from wandering and death. Each of us knows one man that can be brought back from the downward spiral of sin. Today, allow God's Spirit to prompt your mind with a brother's name. Then reach out to him and bring him back—not to your way, but to God, and in so doing cover over a multitude of potential sins.

ASK THIS: Who is someone that comes to mind?

DO THIS: Call, text, or email this person and pray with them.

PRAY THIS: God, bring to mind one name. Give me the courage to call and bring them back.