



MONDAY 23 JANUARY 2017

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

Read: James 5:1-6

Plug In...

James sits us to attention, "Now listen!" Nearing the end of his letter, James shifts up to a super urgent tone! The theme: arrogance is the danger. Wealth is presented as a catalyst for perilous, smug arrogance.

Chew It Over...

By the world's standards many of us are astonishingly wealthy. Arrogance is a danger for us. Wealth of course is not evil in and of itself, indeed all of the gold and silver belongs to God (Haggai 2:8) and the cattle on a thousand hills are His (Psalm 50:10). The problem is with our sinful nature.

With what crimes are the wealthy charged in these verses?

What examples do you see of the arrogance that is prompted by wealth?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that the Holy Spirit will continually convict you of the lurking dangers of wealth. Ask God for a generous heart that delights in being generous.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 24 JANUARY 2017

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

Read: James 5:3 & Amos 9

Plug In...

James charged the wealthy to whom he was writing with hoarding "wealth in the last days". James wasn't, as some believe, simply deluded into thinking that Jesus' return would certainly occur in a matter of weeks, a conviction which many were forced to modify as the first-century wore on. Instead he shared with the other New Testament writers a common conviction about the impact of the appearance of Jesus on history.

The "last days" or sometimes the "day of the Lord" or simply "that day" is a key concept in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament it was the long awaited and distant day that would signal God's personal and glorious intervention at the end of history to establish His rule over all humanity. However, with the coming of Jesus something extra-ordinary has taken place. What's expected to all happen in that one "day" (such as Amos 9:11) the New Testament writers see as occurring across two moments. Moment one – Jesus' resurrection; moment two – Jesus' return and the resurrection of all God's people. In between the gospel is proclaimed. [NB: The book of Acts bears this out. You can trace it through by reading Acts 1:6-11 & then skip to what *James* himself says in Acts 15:12-19.]

Chew It Over...

“You have hoarded wealth in the last days” (5:3). It is a frightening charge. How can you make plans to ensure that this is not true of you?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray. We live in an incredible stage in history, having seen the arrival of the Messiah, and now we await His return. Give thanks for the privilege of being His people at this time, as we long for His return. Ask that these statements about living in the *last days* will shape our thinking and actions for the life we live *now*.



WEDNESDAY 25 JANUARY 2017

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

Read: James 5:7-9

Plug In...

Yesterday's verses said the end of the last days is coming. For anyone waiting, particularly if they suffer under oppression or have incurred cost from their own pocket as they seek to ensure justice is done, James says "be patient". James speaks of a sudden and imminent change on the horizon. He recognises there are pressures during the wait which may prompt grumbling. To this James' language is strong, intense, and threatening.

Chew It Over...

What pressures, as we wait for the Lord's return, might cause us to grumble against each other as Christians?

What can you do to stop them?

Grumbling suggests we've let go of our grip of God's promise to return. Review your grumbling over the past 24 hours. It may reveal some big issues to repent over.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that God will give us everything we need to cope with the pressures of Christian life as we await His return.



THURSDAY 26 JANUARY 2017

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

Read: James 5:10-11 & Hebrews 11

Plug In...

For the prophets to be an example of suffering and patience indicates Christians should not be surprised at the reality of suffering. James summarises the resolution to Job's awful experience. The LORD is *very* compassionate and merciful.

Hebrews 11 is full of examples of God, in the end, lifting up those who are faithful.

Chew It Over...

Why is it often hard to give thanks to God in the time of suffering?

Do you have a godly, Job-like, perspective of the suffering you might be going through at the moment?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that you may trust God at the difficult and painful times in your life, as Job did.



FRIDAY 27 JANUARY 2017

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

Read: James 5:12

Plug In...

James moves back again to the issue of speech. Say what you mean. "Yes" is yes; "no" is no. Faithfulness in word is an essential character of God. In the context of suffering people are still called to be faithful to their word, but likely find impingements make it harder to do so.

Chew It Over...

Sometimes saying 'yes' won't hurt us, until a particular context of suffering happens. Then a previous 'yes' now comes back to bite. At that moment we are tempted to make our words rubbery, look for escape clauses, press the fine print. The Christian will absorb the loss in order to remain faithful for they trust in God. To do otherwise betrays that one trusts their own manipulation of the situation rather than God's faithfulness.

As a child of God are you reliable in your speech? Can you be trusted to do what you say?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray for opportunities to be faithful in your speech. Ask for strength to run at a loss, absorb the disadvantage, should it be to be faithful, to advantage others.



WEEKEND 28-29 JANUARY 2017

SERIES: THE LETTER OF JAMES

Read: James 5:13-20

Plug In...

James ends his letter by saying pray. Pray intensely, earnestly. Especially if one finds themselves sick. This is a fitting note for James to end on. He's addressed Christians who struggle, stumble, and make mistakes. Internal struggles over their desires, grumbling, bickering; external struggles – things come up which test their faithfulness. Remember, James causes His audience to look in the mirror, face the fact they are sinful, and respond by humbling themselves and receiving more grace (4:6).

A given sickness may be a wake-up call from God driving us humbly to our knees. Such a wake-up call is a good gift from a loving Father (1:17). If sick, James teaches healing comes from God. While believers should be bold in praying for healing, the prayer of faith submits to the will of God (James 4.15, *cf.* Matthew 6:10).

Chew It Over...

Sickness exists in the world as a result of sin; it affects us all. Sometimes a given sickness may be directly and specifically related to a sin. James first gives an individual instance, then mentions Elijah. Elijah prayed for a sick Israel, an Israel suffering drought as a direct result of their idolatry. This sin-sickness connection is not unique to James, see also John 5:14 and 1 Corinthians 11:27-30.

What do we do if we are sick, or someone else is sick? Pray intensely and earnestly. Get the elders to pray for you/them. Pray boldly to the God who can heal. It may be through the sickness God is making it obvious to you that you must repent and humble yourself again. Repent and trust in Jesus knowing that Jesus forgives your sin. It may be that the sickness lifts; it may be that it stays as an ever-present reminder in this life to trust in God (see Paul's story of God protecting him from pride – 2 Corinthians 12:1-10). Nevertheless, it is the forgiveness in the name of the Lord Jesus which assures we will be resurrected in the end (v.15 – raised up).

We must be careful with this truth. There is not always a direct correlation between specific sin and sickness (we get colds, we get chronic diseases, some are born blind – John 9:3 – we will have that final sickness, death). Nevertheless, sickness is occasion to ask the question: Is God getting me to stop and look in the mirror? Is God giving me a “good gift” to prevent me straying further from the truth; is God kindly turning me back?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray in repentance if you sense God is making specific sin in your life obvious to you at the moment. Ask for forgiveness. Also ask for healing. Pray for those you know who are suffering sickness at the moment that God may choose to heal them. Pray for submission to God's will. Pray for the desire to pray, especially when we are suffering and don't feel like it.