

Silver City Youth Conference

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[0 : 00] In following that which we are called to do, the biggest problem that we have is our own sinful desires. He makes it really clear to us, if you're tempted, if you stray, if you listen as the picture is painted to that prostitute of self-desire, you only have yourself to blame.

Don't blame anybody else. Don't blame God. You've listened to yourself. That is the battle that we face. And his picture is, if you can come to terms with battling with that by the power of the Spirit of God in his word, then all of those issues outside of yourself, the trials and temptations that you face on a daily basis, ordinary and extraordinary trials, you can come to terms with because the biggest enemy that you have is your own desires.

And then we see that James then paints pictures of practical living. How to actually live out this faith which now exists within us, this gift of God, this welling up of belief by the power of the Spirit, which is nurtured by the truth of God, the body of faith, and results in us living out a life of visible faith.

Faith can mean three things in the New Testament. It's the faith which abides within us. It's the faith which abides within us.

The gift of God, the body of truth, the word of God, the message of the Bible and the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that which we then live out, the faith, that visible, life-changing, counter-cultural life, which speaks, this person is different.

[2 : 11] That's how we should be. That's how we should hold out the faith. And now we come to this final chapter of the book. James wants to focus our minds on the objective.

The reason why we should do this. We could call this study this morning something like living against the tide.

Some years back, it was a couple of days before Christmas, and I was in trouble, as usual. I hadn't done the shopping, and my wife would be disappointed if I didn't thrill her on Christmas morning. So I ventured into our local shopping centre. Big shopping centre, one of these big indoor things. Terrible, terrible place.

And I could see, at around about 15 yards, the shop that I knew I had to get to. I wanted to go into that shop. That would make my wife happy if I bought something from that shop.

[3 : 27] And as I'm travelling down, the crush of people around me, trying to get to that shop, 15 yards away. I remember it to this day.

I wandered past that shop, trying to get to it, but the crowd around me was so great that I couldn't get to the shop. People call that enjoyable shopping.

I can't come to terms with that. I passed it by. I was going with the flow. And James says, Friends, brothers, Christians, live your life against the flow.

Now for you to live like that, for you to live your life against that kind of tide coming towards you, you are going to be bruised on the journey.

You are going to be battered as you try to fight against that which is opposing you. So in order to do that, have your mind, your eyes, your desire fixed on something in the future.

[4 : 40] Let's see how he explains that in chapter 5. Firstly, he recognises that there are two categories of people here in this world.

Only two. the us and the them. The sheep and the goats. The believer and the unbeliever.

I don't know where you stand this morning. I'm in a privileged position in one sense. I can say many things because I don't know you. I can be very direct because I don't know you.

Where do you stand this morning? Because there are two categories of people here in this world.

There are the believers in Jesus Christ, those who have hope for the future, and there are the unbelievers.

And James uses an example of unbelief. He points to the rich. It's an interesting choice.

[5 : 46] We've been considering this past week whether James was anti-rich, pro-poor. Or is he actually pointing at something which gets to the very root of the desires of the people of this world, the world around us, and frighteningly, brothers and sisters of those in the church as well.

He says in verse 1, 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 treasure in the last days.

That's what he says. I want to use as an example of the unbeliever, the rich. We are all rich this morning in relative terms.

If you have woken up this morning with a roof over your head and you have ate food before you've come out to the meeting this morning, you are rich. But even if you are not considering yourself rich this morning, the point that James is wanting to make is that there is a desire in all of us to store up riches here in this world, isn't there?

[7 : 26] 3rd of February this year was the largest Euro lottery payout. It was split between three winners, £125 million. Sales in the UK in the week before that payout had increased by 1,200%.

The previous highest payout there was an estimated 96% of the population of this country had bought a ticket.

96% estimated had bought a ticket. You see, riches, well that will solve everything.

that would solve the problems of my life. It would address the issues. And he says, you who desire that, weep and howl now.

Moan now, he says, for what is coming upon you. Be absolutely broken because of what is coming.

[8 : 40] That's the starting point for James in this chapter. He wants to get our minds as we as believers in Jesus Christ focused not on the now but focused on what is coming.

What is in the future. And these who are rich, who are filling their lives with riches, who are creating a security for themselves in their riches, you should be terrified now, because of what is coming in the future.

In other words, he's saying to the rich, lift your eyes up and look at what's coming. There are three ways. The object of their affection is their clothing, which is now moth-eaten.

Isn't it interesting? I wonder how many rich people would have looked in their wardrobe at this point and said, it's not moth-eaten. It's not moth-eaten, the gold and silver, that's not corroded.

And James is using that typical biblical picture of saying, what you don't see is that it is worthless. You can't look at it and see that it's moth-eaten.

[9 : 58] That's the biggest problem that you've got. You've got your security, you've got the object of your desire, the object of your affection on something which in the view of heaven is already moth-eaten and corroded away.

Precious metals. And the root of our problem, the root of the issue here, and the reason that they are condemned, is not because of their possession, the Bible doesn't condemn richness.

It's saying here, your security, your hope, your desire, is rooted in something which is temporary, not permanent.

That's the definition of your hope. And you rich, what's more, you've stored it up.

You've not used it effectively. At a good weekend, we've considered some big issues. What's the object of our affection?

[11 : 19] What's our desires? What's our ambitions? How many of you younger folks have gone to university with a desire for a particular career? How many of you gone into that and said, I want to earn a lot of money so that I can give a lot of money away?

There's nothing wrong with earning a lot of money. The problem is when you make it your security. And then it escalates, starts to grow.

James takes those who have their hope in riches to the next stage and he says, look at the labourers who mowed your field.

You've kept back their wages by fraud and their crying, their appeals have gone up to heaven.

Doesn't it take you back to Egypt where the prayers of God's people, the cries of God's people, the injustice was heard in heaven when it was not heard in the world.

The cries of those labourers who you have defrauded, guys, ladies who are in important business responsibilities, you know and I know that there are many times when with all of the trippings and gloss of the 20th and 21st century, we do just this.

[13 : 09] We hold back what is rightfully to be paid. Why? Because we're holding on to something that we want.

Now it takes us right back to chapter one. The biggest problem that we face is our own desires. I want this now.

And what does that do? Well it establishes a life cycle. It establishes a pattern of life. In verse five, you have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence.

You have fattened your hearts in the day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you. Self-indulgence is the order of our day.

It's the objective of our day. And the problem that James is saying is this is the picture and the problem is that you're living here without any account of what's going on in the future.

[14 : 22] He talks about here about murdering the righteous person. Well, literal murder is most unlikely as the term here.

You have condemned, you have taken to court, you have followed through on this fraudulent activity and you have stolen to the point of death. This speaks of our culture.

The world consumed with the here and now, with no accountability for the future. Now, James is saying, I want to take this picture of the rich man.

Riches are the issue that I want to use to describe how to live counter-culturally, how to live flowing against the tide, how to live fighting against those who are all streaming in a direction which has no view of the future.

He says in chapter 5 and verse 7, you, brothers, be patient.

[15 : 43] You have a view which is beyond the here and now. You have a view for the future. You have a view which is beyond the current.

You have a view like the farmer who waits patiently for the precious fruit of the earth. And being patient, he waits for the early and the late rains.

Those rainy seasons that come. The first rainy season, he sees nothing. He waits patiently, knowing that the rainy season that seems to have done nothing, is going to follow on with the second rainy season, where the success of the seed that is sown is seen.

That's just the picture that James wants to paint to these Christians. You think you're living against the tide. You think you're going against the flow.

You think you're finding it difficult. You're bruised. You're facing trials, struggles. Those rich are the ones who are equally throwing you into prison.

[16 : 56] you realise that though you do not see anything at this point in time, in the first rain, you have a view to the future.

Because the work is being done, but it's hidden. It's the picture that James is wanting to paint for the believer.

you look forward. Be patient. Wait for the coming of Jesus Christ. We need to realise that this book of James that is calling us to a change of life is a book that is stating for us reward.

God always rewards. God always gives. If God didn't give, he would be beholden to our activity.

We obey because, in one sense, he promises to give and to give and to give. There is grace in all that God does. He promises us salvation, we believe his word, and he gives.

[18 : 17] And ultimately, the greatest gift of God, is that boundless treasure that is in the future. That's our confidence, that's our hope, that's grace.

But he continues to give and to give. When I've been there a thousand years bright, shining as the sun, I've no less days to sing God's praise than when I first began.

That's hope, isn't it? That's confidence, that what is coming is worth so much more than the here and now.

Get your eyes up. Get looking to the future with confidence. Onion, if you haven't read Pilgrim's Progress, you need to.

It's a great book. book. If you haven't read it, you must read it. My conviction is probably next important read to the Bible, but that's maybe because I trust that the Lord used it as part of the means for my conversion, so maybe I'm biased.

[19 : 35] But you must read it. Bunyan paints a lovely picture in the interpreter's house. Two little children, passion and patience.

passion is screaming wildly for toys. He's given a bag of treasure, but quickly it's rags and broken pieces.

Patience waits until the next year, and then he receives treasure that can never be broken, treasure that can never be tarnished, treasure that can never fail.

Jesus said, do not lay up treasure for yourselves on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasure 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. And that's the point of James chapter 5, the comparison.

[20 : 51] Where is your heart? Is your heart on the here and now? Or is your heart on the promises of God for the future?

Jesus, the example of those who have been steadfast. One of those is Job. You've heard the steadfastness of Job and you've seen the purposes of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

How the Lord is compassionate and merciful. Job's an example of that. You know the story of Job. In a moment, he's lost everything.

Then he loses his health. He loses all that this world has to offer. And yet, through his faithfulness, in spite of the silly words that he uses at times, in spite of the fact that God has to show him his glory and his sovereign will over his life, in no uncertain terms, Job receives greater abundance than he ever had.

Why did Job receive that? Job did not receive that because he had sustained and been steadfast and therefore God paid him back for his faithfulness.

[22 : 29] God received all of that so that James is able to say to us today, this God who might take you through trials and temptations and hardships, he is a God who is faithful.

And for a brief moment, Job receives greater than he ever had before, so that you and I can know that our God is faithful and when he promises, it will be ours because our God is good and rewards with abundance.

Why was Lazarus raised from the dead? He died again, didn't he? Why was Lazarus raised from the dead? He was raised from the dead so that you and I can believe that our God raises the dead. The pictures that we have in the Bible are short term for the reality that is everlasting. Job's short term treasure is a picture of eternal treasure as Lazarus' short term resurrection is a picture of eternal resurrection.

And James wants to say to you and me, friend, if you're going to live against the tide, if you're going to live counter culturally, if you're going to have your treasures something other than this world, then have your eyes fixed on reward.

[24 : 10] Unashamedly, have your eyes fixed on reward. When we realise that taking from God is glorious to him, then we can take and take and take because his treasure store will never empty.

His glory will never be diminished by giving to us. And that's where our eyes are, that's where our hope is, that's where our focus is.

Look up, look to the future, have an incentive, have a confidence in the reward of God. And then finally, almost as a contrast, James says, now, 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.

my conviction is that this verse has been used very often out of context. It's contrary to what James is describing as the rich, who are saying, they're yes, but it actually means no, and then no actually means yes.

And James says, in the light of a promised hope in the future, in the light of a conviction that our God is going to reward, live your life in honesty and purity.

[25 : 50] Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Let your word be truth. Let it make a difference. Be counter-cultural.

Stand out. Be bruised on the way. Face trials on the way. It doesn't matter, friends, because the rewards make it all worthwhile.

James uses the rich as an example. He's saying, this is their treasure. Don't hold these kind of treasures.

Don't hold the temporary as treasures. I wonder what is your treasure this morning. Is it your time? Though I'll only give so much of my time, is it your family?

father. That's why Jesus said, whoever doesn't hate his father or mother or brother and sister cannot be my disciple.

[27 : 10] Because if our priorities are our family, then that's our treasure. And that's idolatry. God is our treasure.

And the hope of the future is our confidence to say that letting go of these temporary things will be rewarded.

James is saying to his brothers of the dispersion. That's the church. That's you and me today. Live a life that is so clearly different to those around you that you cannot help but be a missionary.

You cannot help but be that person that holds out the faith of Jesus Christ as evident in your life.

Be visible. Be seen. This is a dramatic communication to a sin sick world.

[28 : 36] Our youth leader remarkably converted a few years ago. He was on a training course in the past week with some communications guru down in London.

During the training session this guy was explaining to him five levels of communication. We start at level five with general chit chat and we get right up to level one where we're getting right into the guts of really communicating with each other.

Then he said now I want you to break up into groups. See what level of communication you can get to. So Rich asked the guy to come and join him.

He said to him I want to tell you that the communication that you've just described is the communication of Jesus Christ to his church. And it's the communication that we all need to hear.

And for ten minutes he spoke to him about the gospel. I couldn't do that. He's gifted. He has a gift of an evangelist as the Bible describes it.

[29 : 47] But he's living a visible life. Later on in the evening he was sat next to him at a table, special dinner, and the guy turns to him.

This is a guy who is, well he's worth a fortune. He's a respected management trainee. He turned to him and said, Rich you know what you said before? Well, can you help me?

I've got everything and I've got nothing. I've got my third wife who's about to divorce me. I've got two children who I pay for who I never see.

My life is a mess. On the outside it looks great and the reality is I am empty. And there's something else that I find amazing in what you said today.

Two weeks ago I was at my solicitors to talk about the divorce. And the solicitor said, OK, I'll give you half an hour of my time for free if you give me 15 minutes of your time for free.

[30 : 57] So they talked for half an hour and got legal advice. And then in the 15 minutes that followed the solicitor turned to this man and he said, I want to tell you that no matter what we do through these next few months, the one thing that you need is Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

Wow. There's a guy being pursued by God, isn't it? Every way he turns, he's hearing the message of Jesus Christ.

And James is saying, you friends, you be like that because this world is lost. It's got nothing. It's got all the front of riches and it is moth eaten and corroded behind the scenes.

You be those who live it out. And why? Because there is great hope for the future. There is a higher throne than all this world has known where faithful ones from every tongue will one day come.

Before the sun will stand, made faultless through the lamb, believing hearts find promised grace, salvation comes.

[32 : 20] And there we'll find our home, our life before the throne. we'll honor him in perfect song where we belong.

He'll wipe each tear-stained eye as thirst and hunger die. The lamb becomes our shepherd king. We'll reign with him. we stand as those who revel in the grace of Jesus Christ.

Christ, we have been the recipients of the love of God, our Father in heaven. And we know the power of the Holy Spirit, giving us life and breath in the spiritual realms.

May all our praise and glory be to you, our God and safe.