

**CCF Study Notes**  
**Tuesday 7 AM Study**  
**7 November 2006**  
**James 5**

Before beginning to read from James, let us spend time in prayer, considering how we ought to live in these, the last days. Let us ask God to help us do the following:

1. **Hold** lightly to our riches, always seeking to do justice in using wealth,
2. **Patiently wait** for the coming of the Lord, establishing our hearts in Him,
3. **Look** at the patience of those who have served God before us,
4. **Reverence** God,
5. **Pray** fervently,
6. **Pray** effectively, and
7. **Reach** out to those who have stumbled.

How should we live, knowing that we are living in the last days? We must not rejoice in wealth, nor misuse wealth to oppress the poor. Patience waits for the harvest to come in God's time. We want things right now. God's timing is perfect. God will come when this world is ripe for the harvest. When times get hard we are not to become grumblers, those who always blame somebody else for their problems. We are not to be those who rely on other things instead of relying on God. Prayer is the tool to deal with all the problems of this life. There is a type of prayer that is powerful and effective. Our job is to reach out to the lost and turn them to Jesus. There is no more important work in all the world – especially today.

(5:1-6) Today, as the coming of the Lord draws near, it is more important than ever that we use wealth properly. Riches naturally tend to be corrupted – and to corrupt us in the process. The idea that the Lord would return to find that we are hoarding wealth for ourselves is frightening! How would we answer God? Who could answer God? Our riches will testify against us to the extent that they have been obtained by oppressing the poor. Pleasure and luxury fatten our hearts for the slaughter – our wealth leaves us open to Satan's work if it is hoarded to our own injury. The ones who get hurt when we hoard wealth are often those who are meek and just in their ways. Are you ready to give Jesus an accounting?

(5:7-9) This book started by talking about how trials bring patience. Patience is the very thing we need most as the coming of the Lord approaches. You see, the harvest is at hand, the time when God will bring in His great harvest. The early and latter rains come before the harvest. Yet we must wait patiently for the harvest. The basic issue is simple. Our hearts are prone to wander when we become impatient. Our hearts are to be firmly established in God. This is the problem with treasures as well: where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. If our heart is set on what this world has to offer us here and now, we will have no reward in heaven. While we are waiting, we must not grumble. Are you ready for Jesus to come back?

(5:10-11) The prophets are great examples of patience. Most of the prophets spoke God's word without ever seeing their prophecies fulfilled. Will we keep speaking God's word today? Will we keep telling people that Jesus is coming back? There is also the simple matter of endurance. Job endured great tribulation. In the end Job experienced God's great compassion and mercy. Likewise, having endured the trials of this life, we will experience God's mercy and compassion for all eternity!

(5:12) What we swear by and what we say reveals what is most central to our lives and to our thinking. We just need to let our yes mean yes and our no mean no. We are to speak in absolute truth and honesty – both to God and to other people. When we rely on somebody or something else to confirm our word we only reveal our own proclivity for lying and prevarication. We set ourselves up for judgment. In the very act of trying to confirm the truth of what we say we prove ourselves to be liars. This is where we need God's wisdom to know when to say "yes" and when to say "no" and when to simply keep quiet. Notice that we are seeing the ideas which were present at the opening of James converging again at the close of James: suffering, patience, holiness, wisdom, prayer and faith. These are the very things that are central to the Christian life.

(5:13-16a) Prayer is a vital part of our lives! If we are suffering we are to pray. If we are cheerful we are to go before God in praise. If we are sick we are to call for prayer. If there is sin in our lives we are to come with the prayer of repentance so that we can be forgiven. We are to pray for each other's sins. So whatever it is that is keeping you from fellowship with God or with God's people – that is a good case for prayer. Trials and troubles, stumbling and failure, backsliding and doubting – all of these are to be causes for prayer, not for hiding from God.

(5:16b-18) Our prayers can be effective, if they are fervent, if they come from a heart that has been cleansed, if they are without doubting. Too often our prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling. Too often we doubt that any prayer has any chance of being effective. But look at the ministry of Elijah!

(5:19-20) There are those who will wander away in the midst of trials, who will stumble and fall into sin or into error. What of them? We are not to reject the backslider, but seek to turn them from their sinful ways. It is possible to lead people to salvation – even people who are dying in their sins. As we see the end approaching we must reach out a helping hand to those who are floundering around us. The time is too short to do anything else. We are to be those who help to cover sins by leading people to salvation.

P.S. Recordings and notes for these studies are available at <http://www.jstoker.name> . A podcast is available at <http://feeds.feedburner.com/CCF-T-Podcast> .