

GOD OR MONEY?

(James 5:1-20)

DAY ONE READING AND QUESTIONS:

¹Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. ²Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. ³Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ⁴Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. ⁵You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. ⁶You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

- 1. Are riches in themselves evil? What will wealth do for (or to) rich people in this passage?*
- 2. How do the rich hurt others in this passage?*
- 3. If riches are so harmful, why do we seek them?*

DAY TWO READING AND QUESTIONS:

⁷Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! ¹⁰Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

1. *How are farmers patient? How is this an example for Christians?*
2. *What does patience have to do with grumbling?*
3. *How were the prophets and Job patient? Did they never complain? What kind of patience did they have?*

DAY THREE READING AND QUESTIONS:

¹²Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

¹³Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. ¹⁴Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will

be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

1. *What is swearing? Why should we not swear?*
2. *What is the role of the oil in this passage? Does the oil heal? How is it related to prayer?*
3. *Do you have someone to whom you confess? Should you?*

DAY FOUR READING AND QUESTIONS:

¹⁷Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

¹⁹My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, ²⁰remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

1. *Are the biblical heroes really like us?*
2. *Can we stop and start the rain by prayer?*
3. *Why is it important to bring a brother or sister back from sin? Why are we reluctant to confront others about their sins?*

DAY FIVE READING AND QUESTIONS:

Go back and read the entire passage.

1. *How should rich people respond to this passage? How should poor and oppressed people respond?*
2. *How are patience and prayer related?*
3. *Why do you think James ends so abruptly? Are the last two verses a good ending for the letter?*

MEDITATION ON JAMES 5:1-20

God or money?

Most of the time, we fool ourselves into thinking we do not have to choose. We can have God and money.

But what is it that brings us security, meaning, and happiness? God or money? Do we rely on bank accounts, home equity, retirement plans, and insurance? Or do we trust in a God who saves his people?

Again we may answer, "both." But what do we do when we lose our job, the market tumbles, the bank repossesses our house, and the insurance policies are canceled? What do we do in the face of suffering? Trust our health plan? Rely on government safety nets? Or do we put our trust in a faithful God?

None of these things—savings, insurance, houses, jobs, and government programs—are wrong in themselves. But all are dangerous. They tempt us to rely on them, not God.

So what do we do when trouble strikes? We wait patiently. We pray in faith. We do not blame others and grumble against them. Instead we rely on our brothers and sisters. We ask for their prayers.

We confess. We confront them with their sins and they confront us with ours. All to turn us back to the path of truth.

God or money? The choice is ours.

"Father of all, may we rely on you, not on our wealth. May we bring justice and mercy to the poor, as you show mercy to those who wait and pray."