

A Faith For All Circumstances

James 5:1-12

When others cause pain!

Intro: The one thing we know about life is that if we live long enough we will be confronted with things that cause pain. Solomon reminds us that life will have its “dark days” along with the “sunshine”. Perhaps there is no pain greater than that which comes through the uncontrollable events of our natural world, but that comes through the intentional misuse or neglect of another.

Any of us could be vulnerable to pain that is caused by another—a powerful government, an insensitive boss, an angry or negligent spouse or parent. When such things occur in our lives, what should we do? How should we respond? What hope is there for us?

For an answer, let’s turn this morning to James 5. In this chapter, James addresses what was a very common plight of Christians in the first century. Most of them were poor; and as poor people they were often victims of rich and powerful people who misused and oppressed them. James showed them, as well as us, how to respond “when others cause pain”.

A warning to the oppressor, v. 1-6

What the rich had done to the poor!

The rich had hoarded their wealth rather than share it with others!

The rich had such an abundance that it corrupted before they could use it, v. 2. The rust will bear witness to their selfishness, v. 3. Like a cancer, the rust will consume their flesh. A graphic picture indicating that the corruption of their wealth will be their own corruption as well, but like fire (quickly and completely).

The rich gained their wealth by cheating the workers of their wages, v. 4.

God throughout the Scripture speaks against unjust wages; yet the rich ignored the warnings of God to treat workers fairly. Sabaoth is not Sabbath, but a transliteration of the Hebrew word meaning "hosts" --from the word for "war" or "warfare" (Saba). It calls to mind the vast army available to God to fight against the wicked, his great power over all.

The rich have lived a life of luxury (to have it easy or lead a soft life) and wanton pleasure, v. 5.

The rich misused their power in condemning and killing the rich, v. 6. He was helpless before them. He could only go to death without resistance.

How God would judge them!

Weep and howl (you can hear it in the onomatopoeic word "ololuzo" for the miseries coming upon you!

They were headed like cattle to slaughter!
Let us learn this message. God is not unaware of the injustices and unfairness of this life. Life is sometimes so unfair, it prompted Solomon to say, "All is vanity". But he did not turn to a cynicism. Instead, he saw this as the proof of a need for a judgment day and declared, "God will bring every deed to judgment". Indeed he will! You may get by with hurting people here; but you won't get by with it at the judgment seat of God!
This message, no doubt, had a comforting effect on those who had been oppressed by the rich; but God has further words for the oppressed.

Exhortations to the oppressed!, v. 7-12

Be patient (makrothumeo, to be long tempered) until the coming of the Lord
Everybody feels anger when they're treated unfairly. James says, "be long-tempered"; don't let it cause you to
Cf. the farmer's patience, v. 7. He plants and waits patiently (same word as before) for rain in Oct.-Nov. and again in April and May.

Strengthen your hearts, v. 8.

From a word meaning a "support". Stabilize or support your faith, fortify! Reaffirm in your mind the truth about God's justice and the Lord's coming. The Lord's coming "draws near", every day makes it nearer! Every day you suffer is one step closer to the rest and freedom you need!

Do not complain against one another, v. 9

"Stopping murmuring against each other". Sometimes we take our frustrations out on others. The judge is about to enter the chambers! Let that thought keep you from sin.

Follow the example of the prophets, v. 10-11a

We have our word "paradigm" (a pattern for model); this word might be translated "underdigm". The lives of the prophets may serve as an example for us! Think about all that Ezekial or Jeremiah endured to bring God's message to their sinful world. Both were subjected to mistreatment and abuse, even though they were speaking the very words of God!

Remember how God deals with those who are patient! 11b

Think about Job, whose name is synonymous with "endurance in suffering". The end (telios) was that he received the compassion and pity of God. "polusplachnos" (full, inward parts)

Do not swear, v. 12

Suffering may very well make us prone to irreverence as we feel God has abandoned us. It may cause us to speak rashly and misuse God's name.

Conclusion: Faith can help when life is hard and unfair, when other mistreat and abuse us. Someone else's sin never gives us the right to do wrong! We must

live right even when others are mistreating us. Our trust is in God who will judge all with perfect righteousness.