



## INTRO

This is the last lesson in the book of James, one of the general letters. James was writing to the 12 tribes of Israel. These were Jewish Christians, the remnant from each tribe that believed in Jesus. The audience was not surrounded by a strong community of believers so they were constantly tested. MacArthur listed ten tests of James: (1) the test of perseverance in suffering; (2) the test of blame in temptation; (3) the test of response to the Word; (4) the test of impartial love; (5) the test of righteous works; (6) the test of the tongue; (7) the test of humble wisdom; (8) the test of worldly indulgence; (9) the test of dependence; and (10) the test of patient endurance.<sup>1</sup>

James was a book of tests, but the perfect law through Christ led to freedom. If believers looked to the *Perfect Law*, they would be blessed. In Christ, there would be every desire to walk in this way.

## TEACHING

James 5:1-20: The first 11 verses of this chapter were described by MacArthur as, “The Test of Patient Endurance.”<sup>2</sup> People who had wealth were addressed. Their wealth, possessions, and clothing were subject to deterioration such as moth and ruin. The wealth of the people would come and go before the last days.

Constable outlines ten views of money from the perspective of the **world**: “(1) Money brings freedom; (2) Money brings security; (3) Money is what matters; (4) Money is power; (5) Money establishes not only your net worth, but your worth as a person; (6) Money makes you successful; (7) Money gives you options; (8). Money brings happiness; (9) Money is your reward. Save it, spend it on yourself; and (10). Money is your possession. Spend on whatever you want.”<sup>3</sup>

Constable also gave ten contrasting statements of views of money from the perspective of the **Word**: “(1) Only Christ brings true freedom; (2) Real security is found in knowing and trusting God; (3) Christ and the kingdom of God are what matters; (4) Power comes from being filled with the Spirit; (5). Your worth is based on what God says, not what your bank statement says; (6) Success comes from knowing and doing what God says; (7) God is the One that ultimately gives you options; (8) The happiness that money brings is short lived; (9) Give as much as you can; and (10) All that you have is God’s to do with as He pleases.”<sup>4</sup> James wanted everyone to put their stock in God.

Verse 4 addresses holding back the wages of others. Judgment would come for those who accumulated wealth at the expense of others. MacArthur states, “Like fattened cattle ready to be slaughtered, the rich that James condemns had indulged themselves to the limit.”<sup>5</sup> Overindulgence had crept into the lives of those James addressed in this letter.

The rich were hoarding their funds and withholding wages. In verse 6 James stated they were controlling the courts with their money. The rich had indulged themselves to the limits.

The instruction to the believers was to be patient until the Lord comes. MacArthur explains: “Realizing the glory that awaits them at Christ’s return should motivate believers to patiently endure mistreatment (Romans 8:18).” He then explained the phrase, “the early rain and latter rain,” stating, “The rain falls in Israel during October and November and softens the ground for planting. The latter rain falls in March and April, immediately before the spring harvest. Just as the farmer waits patiently from the early rain to the latter for his crop to ripen, so must Christians patiently wait for the Lord’s return (cf. Galatians 6:9; 2 Timothy 4:8; Titus 2:13).”<sup>6</sup> Christ had come and now they would have to wait patiently for the great harvest. In the waiting, the believers should not put their faith in their finances.

<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), pp. 1881–1895.

<sup>2</sup> MacArthur, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Constable, *Constable’s Expository Bible Study Notes: James*, pp. 93–94; available at <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/james.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Constable, pp. 93–94.

<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, pp. 1895–1896.

<sup>6</sup> MacArthur, p. 1896.



*Perfect Law*

# WAITING FOR THE LORD

James 5

Teaching Notes

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The body of Christ was expected to patiently endure. But even when they planted, they needed to wait and strengthen their hearts. The Lord's coming was near. They should not complain or grumble. The judge was standing at the door of the courtroom.

James was like a mini-Proverbs. The prophets were mentioned in verse 11, and Job was referred to as an example of patient endurance.

Verse 12 addressed the test of truthfulness. What the believers said, they were not to take lightly, so they would not fall under judgment.

In verse 13 James shifted to the test of prayerfulness. For those who were suffering, others should pray for them. If anyone was sick, they were "to call the elders of the church for strength, support, and prayer."<sup>7</sup> The prayer of faith would save, restore, and heal the sick person. The person would also be forgiven of their sin. Elijah was referred to as the example of the power of prayer.

Verse 19 was about the test of true faith. Christ wanted to give the believers full freedom. Those who turned a sinner back from the error of his ways would save their life and cover a multitude of sins. They would save a soul from death (v.20).

## CLOSING

Jesus, as the *Perfect Law*, wants to give us full freedom. When a sinner was away from the Lord and came back, it was significant. Christ wanted to give freedom from the bondage of sin. Prayer was required to walk this out to a point of experiencing the full freedom.

<sup>7</sup> MacArthur, p. 1897.