

James “*Confronting Counterfeit Christianity*”  
“*How Faith Stays Steadfast*” (James 5:1-20)

~ INTRO ~

A FEW YEARS AGO...

- I ran a Spartan race with Stephani / Jeff / Jodi / others...
  - o It wasn't a casual 10K race...
    - It was an obstacle race...
      - Hills / mud / rope climb / walls / sandbag carries.
    - o And it was almost 100 degrees out!
- About 2/3 of the way through I wanted to quit...
  - o My legs were cramping / grip was failing...
    - Lungs were burning / body was exhausted.
- The only thing that kept me going...
  - o Was keeping my eye on the finish line...
    - Where I could get some cold water & a break.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LIKENED TO A RACE...

- But it's not a simple Disney 10k...
  - o It's filled with uphill battles & unknown obstacles...
    - That make us want to quit...
      - Or distract us along the way.

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*  
(2 Timothy 4:7) NKJV

TODAY WE'RE GOING TO LEARN...

- Ways to run our race with steadfast faith...
  - o With our eyes on the prize...
    - Able to overcome the obstacles...
      - Finishing without giving up or giving in.

~ RECAP ~

WE'RE COMPLETING...

- Our study thru the book of James...
  - Where he “*Confronts Counterfeit Christianity*”
- James teaches the church about authentic faith...

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- That produces genuine works.

REMEMBER THAT WE’VE LEARNED...

- How James gives us the practice of the Christian faith...
  - Not rules intended to regulate behavior.
    - “This is what Christians do...
      - Not do this or else.”
        - (Puzzle illustration vs. do’s & don’ts)
- How “*When Faith Gets Real.*”
  - When I’m tested
  - When I’m tempted
  - When I have to obey.
- How “*Faith Proves Real*”
  - In my motives
  - In my actions
  - In my speech
- How “*Faith Comes Alive*”
  - In my decisions
  - In revealing my loyalty
  - Playing out in my daily mindset

TODAY... JAMES IS GOING TO SHOW US...

- How to keep our faith steadfast...
  - By keeping our eyes steadfast on Jesus’ return.
- He walks us thru:
  - How to view money & possessions when our hope is on eternity
  - How to respond when we’re suffering & in need of endurance
  - How restoration happens when we’re weak
    - Emotionally / physically / spiritually
- So I’ve titled today’s message...
  - “*How Faith Stays Steadfast*”

**~ IDEA 1 – When Accumulation Replaces Anticipation (vv. 1-6) ~**

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(v. 1)

JAMES SPEAKS TO THE WEALTHY PERSON...

- Who is identified by their outward appearance...
  - And their inward spiritual bankruptcy.
    - (Guy driving the Charger)

WHEN WE START TO READ ABOUT A RICH PERSON...

- Sometimes we begin to tune out...
  - Because we tend to think our tax bracket doesn't qualify.

(vv. 3-6)

HOWEVER... JAMES WARNS THOSE WHO'S FAITH...

- Has been choked out by their obsession with monetary provision...
  - Instead of living with eternity in mind.
- This is the person who:

#1 – PUTS CONFIDENCE IN RICHES

- Thinking money gives them control & security
  - (1 Timothy 6:10, 17-19) NLT
- (v. 10) Craving =
  - To stretch one's self out to touch or grasp something
  - To give up one's self to the love of money
    - Putting confidence in riches causes the believer...
      - To stray away from living by faith...
        - To chasing monetary provisions.

#2 – ACCUMULATES WEALTH SELFISHLY

- Ignoring the opportunity to use it kingdom impact

WHEN WE'RE FOOLED INTO LIVING THIS WAY...

- We move from confidence in riches...
  - To hoarding & accumulating...
    - To gain more control over our lives.

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- Hoarding is defined as:
  - Accumulation of money / possessions / resources...
    - Beyond what is reasonable or necessary.
    - Without regard for the needs of others.
  - Not just saving...
    - It's stockpiling without sharing.
- Jesus taught us a different way of living...
  - (Matthew 6:19-21) NLT

**#3 – PROFITS BY INJUSTICE**

- Cheating or exploiting others to get ahead

MAYBE YOU'RE NOT IN A PLACE...

- Where you're treating people unjustly...
  - Not paying them or scheming to get rich.
- Maybe you're cheating others...
  - Because you're overworking to gain more.
- Maybe you're cheating the church...
  - Because your focus is on working instead of living by faith.
- Maybe you're cheating Jesus...
  - Because you're too busy to worship!
    - (Proverbs 23:4) NLT

FOLLOWING JESUS MEANS...

- Living my life centered on kingdom impact...
  - Not becoming distracted by material gain for:
    - My control / my comfort / my consumption.

**~ IDEA 2 – Staying Steady Through The Struggle (vv. 7-12) ~**

(v. 7-8)

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NOW JAMES TRANSITIONS...

- To speak to the person who's struggling...
  - With pro-tips on how to stay steady.

HE IDENTIFIES THREE OBSTACLES...

- That show up in the midst of struggles & suffering.

**#1 – BECOMING IMPATIENT**

- Wanting God to move faster than He is...
  - Pointing to the farmer as an example of how to wait.

*“The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.” (2 Peter 3:9) NLT*

(v. 9)

**#2 – COMPLAINING & GRUMBLING**

- Venting frustration onto others...
  - Pointing to God who sees everything & will someday judge
    - (2 Tim. 4:1)
- In suffering people often turn on each other...
  - Creating division / fault finding / bitterness

(v. 12)

**#3 – COMPROMISED COMMITMENTS**

- Because letting our “yes” mean yes starts to slip when times get tough
  - So He quotes Jesus’ teaching...
    - (Matthew 5:37) NLT

THIS WHOLE SECTION STIRS THE BELIEVER...

- To refocus their attention from the struggle onto the Savior.
  - Specifically His soon return & great reward.

(v. 10-11)

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HERE JAMES GIVES A POWERFUL EXAMPLE...

- Of someone who endured through deep suffering...
  - (Job 1:15-17) NLT <Finances>
  - (Job 1:19) NLT <Family>
  - (Job 2:7-8) NLT <Health>
- Then he saw God’s faithfulness on the other side...
  - (Job 42:5, 10) NLT
- The story of Job isn’t so much about Job...
  - As it is about God’s character...
    - His mercy / compassion / faithfulness

STAYING STEADY IN THE STRUGGLE...

- Is about seeking God for His strength.
  - (Hebrews 10:36) NLT

JUST LIKE MOSES STOOD BEFORE THE PEOPLE...

- Trapped between Pharaoh and the Red Sea...
  - Pointing out the faithfulness of God.

JAMES IS STANDING BETWEEN...

- Those who are suffering and the Lord’s return saying...
  - Hold fast, Don’t panic, God’s not done!

FOLLOWING JESUS MEANS...

- Having a faith that doesn’t fall apart in hard times...
  - It waits well / speaks life / walks in integrity...
    - Keeps it’s eyes on the finish line!

**~ IDEA 3 – Restoration When I Need It (vv. 13-20) ~**

FINALLY JAMES DEALS WITH THE IDEA OF RESTORATION...

- Not only for ourselves...
  - But how we can be used to restore others.

(vv. 13-16a)

JAMES GIVES A CALL TO PRAYER...

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- For any and all reasons...
  - Suffering = pray
  - Happy = sing & worship
  - Sick = Seek the Lord

WE’RE GIVEN A PRACTICAL WAY TO WALK OUT OUR FAITH...

- In moments of sickness within our lives...
  - In a simple step of obedience to receive
    - Not spiritual gymnastics to achieve.

JAMES TELLS US...

- We should invite others in when during times of sickness...
  - And take the step of faith to seek God.

THIS SECTION IS INTERESTING...

- Because the English language speaks of healing of sickness...
  - Which is a biblical principle we live by...
    - God “*heals all my diseases*”
      - (Psalm 103:2-5) NLT
- But James is also pointing to a spiritual sickness...
  - Due to being weak in my walk.
    - (1 Cor. 11:28, 30) NLT
- Each require me to exercise my faith...
  - By asking someone else to get involved...
    - And it’s often at the foot of the altar...
      - That God brings insight & wisdom to the situation.

EITHER WAY YOU SLICE IT...

- The instruction is the same...
  - Restoration is available to the one who needs it...
    - Because of the power of prayer.

(vv. 16b-18)

FOR THE EXAMPLE OF PRAYER...

- James point to Elijah:
  - A man like you and me

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- Yet accomplished much through prayer.
- The word for “earnestly” literally means...
  - In prayer he prayed.
    - He was all-in when he sought the Lord.
      - (A cloud the size of a man’s hand)

(vv. 19-20)

AT LAST JAMES FINISHES OFF THE BOOK...

- By telling the ones with steadfast faith...
  - To go and confront someone who’s wandering.

IN REALITY THESE VERSES AREN’T JUST A FINAL THOUGHT...

- They’re a summary of the whole book...
  - And a picture of what James has done in our lives.
- He’s spent 5 chapters...
  - Confronting / correcting / calling out counterfeit faith...
    - In a real way bringing back those who are wandering...
      - To the truth of authentic Christianity.

NOW HE URGES US TO DO THE SAME...

- Not to say silent when we see someone drifting...
  - But to step in & speak up...
    - Love enough to say the hard thing...
      - Just like he’s done for us!
- We see Paul encourage the same ...
  - To reset the broken bones in the church...
    - And restore people back to walking by faith.
      - (Gal. 6:1) NLT

FOLLOWING JESUS...

- Isn’t just about getting it right in my life...
  - But about helping others see the inconsistencies in their life...
    - Pointing to a better way forward...
      - And walking with them to bring health.



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**~ IN CLOSING (CALL WORSHIP TEAM) ~**

JAMES FINISHES OFF OUR SECTION...

- Focusing on prayer and receiving healing...
  - I want to make this real for us today...
    - If you are in need of prayer...
      - Don't isolate yourself...
        - Invite others in & receive restoration!