



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

**JAMES, 2 PETER,
& JUDE**
Week 3

The Problem of Riches

James 5:1-6

OPENING
up to the Word

What does *rich* mean to you? (a) *rich* chocolate cake, (b) poetry *rich* with meaning, (c) filthy *rich*, (d) the *riches* of God's grace—2 Corinthians 8:9.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Now James takes rich rulers to task. How had they made their riches corrupt (vs. 1-3)? How can hoarding wealth erode and destroy your faith?

2. Did arrogance lead the rich to abuse their own workers (v. 4)? Whose cries reach up to God?

3. How do many rich people live (vs. 5-6)? Were they living in faith, promoting justice and helping society?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Consider your community. How do the rich contribute? (a) taxes, (b) gifts, (c) salaries, (d) politics, (e) lavish parties.

2. How are you using your financial assets? (a) for self only, (b) for family security, (c) for the gospel, (d) for the needy.

3. Do you share your blessings with those less fortunate?

WINDOW
on the Word

*For James, a life of faith should include a desire for **justice**. A desire for justice includes compassion for the poor, the sick and those in desperate need. Some today equate justice as the penalty others should pay for their behavior. But the justice we hear within the New Covenant involves mercy rather than condemnation.*

The Patience of Prophets

DAY 16

James 5:7-12

What do you think about patience? (a) you don't have the time for patience, (b) you're only patient when you're forced to be, (c) you've got all the time in the world.

1. How important is patience in the life of faith (vs. 7-10)? Review 1:3-4, 12. So why not grumble (v. 9)?

2. Who is James' example of patience (vs. 10-11)? How does his story show patience in the face of suffering? Who was responsible for causing the suffering (Job 2:4-7)?

1. On the impatience thermometer, where is your temperature? (a) 32° and freezing, (b) normal at 98.6°, (c) feverish at 101°, (d) boiling at 212°.

2. How many examples of patience can you list from the Bible? From those you know in your own life?

3. Count the many ways you have experienced the compassion and mercy of the Lord.

*James calls Christians to live by their word—not relying on **oaths** as a proof of truthfulness (5:12). This reflects the admonition of Jesus in Matthew 5:33-37. The tongue is to be an instrument that speaks to living faith, not to lies and judgmental slander (Jas 2:15-17; 3:1, 5-10; 4:10-12; 5:9, 12). Boasting defeats faith (Jas 3:14-16; 4:16).*

OPENING

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DIGGING

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The Power of Prayer

James 5:13-20

OPENING
up to the Word

St. Francis of Assisi left us a great prayer of faith: “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace...”

DIGGING
into the Word

1. James wraps up his epistle with an exhortation to prayers of faith and songs of praise (vs. 13-15). How can prayer and songs reflect the Christian worship of God?

2. Why does James connect sickness with the need for forgiveness (vs. 15-16)?

3. How does Elijah reflect living faith (vs. 17-18)? Read the account in 1 Kings 17 and 18.

4. How should Christians with living faith treat those who “wander from the truth” (vs. 19-20)? See Galatians 6:1-2.

LIVING
out the Word

1. Is there someone who is suffering for whom you are praying?

2. Can you think of a song of praise that expresses your joy?

WINDOW
on the Word

*In the first century, James called on believers to **confess their sins** to one another and to pray for each other (5:15-16). At that time, sickness was seen as an indication of sin that had not been confessed and acknowledged. Later, as the church grew beyond the small, communal family as it was during the time of James, open confession in church was no longer felt to be the best way to seek reconciliation with God. The practice of confessing one’s sins differs in Christian faith and tradition. Protestants emphasize the need for individuals to confess their sins directly to God, while Catholics encourage confessing sins to the priesthood, as intermediaries between God and the believer.*

“Elijah 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.”

James 5:17



Introduction to 2 Peter

Authorship: Similarities between this epistle and 1 Peter suggest that they were written by the same author. Internal evidence points to the apostle Peter, since he was one of three apostles present at the transfiguration (2Pe 1:16-18 with Lk 9:28-36). The early church fathers included it in the canon based on the belief that it was written by an apostle.

Date: This epistle was probably written shortly before Peter's martyrdom in Rome in A.D. 67.

Setting and purpose: Peter writes to Christians who have received the precious gift of faith (1:1). Based on the number of references to individuals and incidents recorded in the Old Testament, Peter may have had Jewish Christians uppermost in his mind.

Second Peter resounds with warnings about the dangers of false prophets pulling the readers away from the pure religion of Jesus Christ (2-3:13). Diligence should be taken to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (3:14-18).

Background: Peter and his brother Andrew were fishermen on the sea of Galilee when Jesus called them to follow him. Peter stands out as a daring, energetic young man eager to follow Jesus, yet slow to grasp the meaning of his Master's words. He is more often mentioned in context with Jesus than any other disciple. His name heads each of the four lists given of the disciples.

Peter became the leading apostle, at least as the story is told in Acts 1-5. He preached at the Temple on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon all the 120 followers of Jesus (Ac 2). He preached in the courtyard after the healing of the lame man (Ac 3). He was imprisoned by the Sanhedrin, the Temple council, and eventually released (Ac 4-5).

From Jerusalem, Peter ministered to those who had been baptized by Philip in Samaria (Ac 8). Later, God used Peter to bring salvation to the household of Cornelius, a gentile in

Caesarea (Ac 10). This event brought new understanding to church leaders in Jerusalem (now under the direction of James, the half brother of Jesus) that the law of Moses was not required for salvation. However, Peter still had some difficulties with fully accepting gentiles into fellowship of the church, as evidenced in his conflict with Paul in Antioch (Gal 2:11-14).

At the council of Jerusalem, however, Peter had come over to Paul's side. In his influential speech at the council of Jerusalem, he cited the conversion of Cornelius, the disobedience of Israel through the period of the law and his personal experience with God. He concluded that salvation comes only through the gift of grace, not through works of circumcision and the law of Moses (Ac 15:7-11).

Peter, as apostle, worked primarily with Jewish Christians. Tradition holds that he was crucified in Rome about A.D. 67. St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City was built at what some believe to be the traditional site of his crucifixion.

Outline:

I. DEVELOPMENT OF GODLINESS, 1

- A. Precious Promises, 1:1-9
- B. Founded on Faith, 1:10-15
- C. The Day Dawns, 1:16-21

II. DESTRUCTIVENESS OF FALSE TEACHERS, 2

- A. Deceptive Destroyers, 2:1-10
- B. Slandering Scumbags, 2:11-16
- C. Prevaricating Prophets, 2:17-22

III. DESTINY OF THE DAY OF THE LORD, 3

- A. Scoffing Scoundrels, 3:1-7
- B. Lord of Life, 3:8-13
- C. Guard and Grow, 3:14-18

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

2 Peter 1:3



Precious Promises

DAY 18

2 Peter 1:1-9

Recall the words to that cherished Christian hymn, *Standing on the Promises*. What promises do you stand on?

1. Examine Peter's introduction (vs. 1-2). How had his readers "received a faith as precious" as Peter's?

2. How is the power of God seen in the life of Christians (v. 3)? How do his "precious promises" change one's life (v. 4)?

3. Peter lists several qualities that God graciously allows Christians to develop as we mature in Christ (vs. 5-9). How would you define each?

1. What priority would you give to faith in your life (v. 1)? What about God's precious promises (v. 4)?

2. Which of the qualities that Peter lists (vs. 5-7) are your strengths? Your weaknesses?

3. How good is your spiritual vision (v. 9)? And your memory of God's grace in your life?

*When Christ returns, we will be like he is (1Jn 3:2). But in this life, we have only a down payment, a partial fulfillment of the promise. But even in this life, we **participate in the divine nature** (2Pe1:4) as God the Holy Spirit works and lives within us.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Founded on Faith

2 Peter 1:10-15

OPENING
up to the Word

What are your favorite memories? (a) birthday, (b) anniversary celebration, (c) graduation, (d) wedding, (e) birth of a child.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How can you make your calling and election “sure” (vs. 10-11)?

2. What must these readers remember (vs. 12-15)? How does a person become “established in the truth”?

3. How does Peter describe his physical life (vs. 13-14)? What does he anticipate for his future (vs. 11, 15)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Consider your tent—the tent of this body (v. 13). Is it nearsighted (v. 9)? Blind? Under self-control (v. 6)?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Peter used the **tent** as an image of this physical body. In that culture, tents were widely used during travel and during war. It is was a temporary abode for most people, or a shelter for nomads in a life of wandering. For Peter, it represents the temporary nature of this life in contrast with eternal life (v. 11). Peter speaks of making our calling and election sure—the sense in Greek is somewhat like validating a will—accepting an outright gift. By growing in grace (3:18) we see the evidence of God’s work in our lives.*

2 Peter 1:16-21

Have you ever witnessed a major occurrence and then been responsible to describe the events to other people? Did they believe you?

1. How did Peter come into the knowledge of his message (v. 16)? Was it through research or was he actually an eyewitness?

2. Read the account of the transfiguration in Matthew 17:1-8. Compare it with Peter's reflections on his experience with Jesus (1Pe 1:17-18).

1. Consider the terms *glory*, *light* and *day star*. How can they affect your life as a Christian?

2. How have you been "carried along by the Holy Spirit" (v. 21)? Does the Holy Spirit inspire your understanding of Scripture?

*Peter sees the **power and coming of Jesus** in two ways. He came first as Messiah (vs. 16-18), and he will return as the "morning star" that can be viewed when the "day dawns" (v. 19).*

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DAY 21

Deceptive Destroyers

2 Peter 2:1-10

OPENING
up to the Word

What job would you have wanted on Noah's Ark?
(a) animal trainer, (b) veterinarian, (c) dietician, (d) weather forecaster, (e) sanitation engineer.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Peter turns from the "certain" word of God's prophets (1:19-21) to the word of false prophets (2:1-4). What is the base motive of these heretics (v. 3)? And the result of their false teaching?
2. Contrast the consequences of evildoers' actions with the protection granted those who embrace the righteousness of God (vs. 4-10). Review Genesis 6:1-5 and 19:15-29.

LIVING
out the Word

1. How do you think Peter would view preachers who major in the minors of predictive prophecy, physical healing and health, required obedience of Old Covenant laws...it's a long list, isn't it?
2. How do you feel evil is repaid? Do you feel God reaches a tipping point, becoming so angry that he lashes out in fury and wrath? Or, do you feel those who walk on the wide side eventually reap the consequences of their own choices—which God consents to, by virtue of the choices he allows us to make?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Peter contrasts the sovereign **will of God**, with human choices that defy God's will. Peter parallels the wrong choices of false prophets, fallen angels, and citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah.*



“...he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others....”

2 Peter 2:5