

The Letter of James

Faith that works!

Study 9 – An Urgent Warning

Introduction

Of the so-called ‘seven deadly sins’ there are three in particular about which James has warned his readers again and again, namely the sins of *pride*, *envy* and *greed* (see e.g. 1:10-11; 3:13-16; 4:1-3, 6-7). And this is surely no surprise for these three sins really do reveal a heart which is divided, a heart which is in fact worldly and in desperate need of God’s forgiveness and transforming grace.

In the passage before us in this study, James 4:13-5:6, James singles out pride and greed once again and in doing so he urges his readers (including us!) to take careful note of the pitfalls which pride and greed can place across our path, particularly but not exclusively if we are people of means. The two-fold “Now listen” (4:13; 5:1) is designed to grab our attention so that we will indeed listen carefully to James’ teaching and so doing avoid the disastrous consequences that befall those who though they hear the word do not do what it says (1:22-26)

It is not entirely clear whether James is addressing believers or unbelievers in these words. There is merit in the idea that 4:13-17 is addressed to the believers of 1:10 while 5:1-6 are words of warning about the rich in the world at large – certainly 5:1-6 does seem to speak of the inevitability of judgement without the thought of repentance. But either way, we would all do well to hear these words and take them to heart, especially in a country such as ours where there are indeed many who receive a subsistence wage and where greed and exploitation have devastating effects.

Read James 4:13-5:6



Investigate

1. How does James grab our attention in this passage?

2. In what way does James' teaching echo that of Jesus Himself?

Apply



In what way has this passage challenged your thinking?



In what way has this passage spoken to your heart and exposed hidden sins?



What needs to change in your daily life as a result of this passage?