

Oppression and the Question of Our Times

James 1-5

Pastor/Elder Phil Layton, GCBC, June 13, 2021

Please turn to James chapter 5 and this will tie in with our scripture reading from James 2 that talked about people who “oppress you.” James 2 is about judging by externals. Personal favoritism was happening in the Christian assembly and the poor were being dishonored. There was a “rich privilege.” The elites got the special seats, and got the attention. The church had both pride and prejudice. James 2 rebukes all discrimination and any distinctions based on externals. Don’t think a person’s worth is in what he owns (song).

I will not boast in wealth or might ... my Redeemer [is my] greatest treasure

James 5 comes back to that and rebukes lifestyles of the rich and faithless. Our worth is not in what we own. They had class struggles, indulgence and injustice, fraud and favoritism. James speaks to our world, any in positions of power who abuse it and oppress people. We teach through the Bible verse by verse and let the text set the agenda, and sometimes the next text brings up a big subject we need to spend more time on before we move on.

James 2 & 5 brings up oppression and a key question of our times

Today there’s something crucial and controversial we need to look at in the broader context of James and in our context today. **5:4** *Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back **by fraud**, are **crying out against you**, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.* ⁵ *You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.* ⁶ *You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.*

100 years ago at the start of this month was a day of slaughter and of mass murder. June 1st 1921 was the **Tulsa Race Massacre**. A mob tried to lynch a young black man they unjustly condemned. The laborers and hard-working people were soon caught up in gunfights that left dozens dead. Blacks who resisted capture at gunpoint were shot dead in cold blood. History calls it an ethnic cleaning and says no whites were imprisoned for it. 40 blocks of the black community were burned down. A 107-year old survivor of it testified of the difficult poor life she lived while others ignored or profited from it.¹

It was hard not to cry hearing her speak, v. 4 says God hears that heart cry.

In NT times, rich-poor Jew-Gentile hostility was turning deadly

James wrote this to his Jewish brothers who ch 2 says were being oppressed and there was legal injustice. A day of slaughter was coming for them in 70 AD. Romans murdered righteous Jews. Some didn’t even resist but were condemned and killed and Jerusalem was burned down. AD 135, Crusades, WWII ... the Lord of hosts has heard

their cries through the centuries. Anti-Semitism is on the rise today while the supposed antiracists don't say much.

I see videos of Jews, Asians, poor people, etc., horribly mistreated. I hear Christians tell me how those in power over them abused, and I wanna cry. I grew up in a 3rd world country where the president lived in luxury, his wife indulged herself with hundreds of shoes, while shoeless millions in poverty cried out, laboring in fields for a low wage, almost as slaves. Marcos kept by fraud billions for himself, fattening his pockets while the masses starved.

In the DRC the former president literally slaughtered any resistance and he actually destroyed fields near where Didier lives and made himself a multi-billionaire by being a mass-murderer. The Lord of hosts hears and sees that.

Unjust practices (v. 3-4), unconcerned for innocent they destroy (v. 5-6)

In v. 4 there was injustice and inequity between the rich and the poor. There was defrauding and withholding wages, it was a corrupt system. Notice God hears the cries of the working class, the end of v. 4 says their cries reached His ears, even if on earth their protests seem to fall on deaf ears. Or as v. 6 says, when a legal system condemns and puts to death men for crimes they didn't commit (as has tragically happened for some U.S. minorities), that is a wrong the Judge in heaven sees and will make right. Look at v. 9, the end of the verse says the Judge is at standing right at the door. He equally sees abortionists who condemn and put to death innocent lives who can't resist.

To PP, unborn black lives don't matter and are murdered the most. God sees

He also sees when the BLM founder Patrisse Cullors gets rich off the very people she claims to be for, while she's against capitalism. A few weeks ago the NY Post released a story about her buying multi-millions in homes even as she makes a career in condemning white rich folks.² Some wonder if all the BLM talk is for "Bureau of Land Management." Some wonder if BLM="Buying Large Mansions"? But let's point a finger at the "church": the worst examples of James 5 may be televangelist fraud. They take wages from poor people to fatten their accounts and fly private jets. They slaughter the scriptures and make a killing promising health and "your best life now."

The prosperity they preach only comes to them, but the Lord of hosts hears.

True faith says I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold or riches untold

Word-faith preachers on TV are a false religion draining widows to the last 2 mites before they die. James 1:27 says true religion takes care of widows.

James 2:6 *You have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you...*

Oppression is a buzzword but it's a biblical word for our study today. It's not all rich people or all of 1 racial group who are oppressors. But there are those with the resources who are to this day oppressing, even professing Christians. James 5:1 says to you rich people who ignore the cries of those under you: you need to cry and weep, your misery is coming. In v. 3 he says basically all your stuff is all gonna burn, your love of money destroys you.

Instead of hoarding in v. 2, be helping (ch 2). Don't be greedy, be a giver. In v. 7f live in light of Christ's return, this isn't your home, live for eternity.

That's the big idea of the text but there's also a big question for our times in it: how are Christians to think about the question of oppression and how the world answers it categorizes oppressor-oppressed? Our world is crying out about oppression and we need to see what the Word says, God's answer.

This oppression question may become the defining question of our times

Our government has tried an answer to the rich-poor issue for decades, it's a welfare state. People and politicians cry out for handouts, wealth taken from workers and given to the poor so they don't have to work. But that's not the cry of this scripture. Notice in v. 4 it's the laborers who worked for wages not getting paid for their work. Today our government pays people to not work for wages. It's gotten worse with COVID and the new administration (Senate Budget Committee chair Sanders is socialist, stimulus checks, etc.). It's getting hard to get people back to work or to go to work, or work hard.

In v. 4 they cried for pay for their work, today they cry if they have to work.

We have crazy policies and lazy people – my generation and kids need this biblical work ethic, not bigger government. God's Word says if a man isn't willing to work, he shall not eat. Government says the opposite in America.

But biblical Israel had a system of workfare (note v. 4b harvesters, Ruth). God's people need to work to reward work and help those who can't (2:15). Being generous, merciful, caring for the vulnerable is a mark of saving faith

I started 100 years ago this month, just 1 year ago this month tragic cries of George Floyd became the cries of our culture. Bystanders cried out against the policeman kneeling on him, some cried offering help, but it seemed to fall on deaf ears (cries the Lord hears in v. 4). The officer continued to pin him down even more minutes after George lost consciousness, and soon lost his life. To use the language of James 5:6, Derek Chauvin's actions were condemned, and just recently he was convicted of 2nd and 3rd degree murder and manslaughter. But a year ago, fear of a virus turned to fear of violence.

Last summer it went from a pandemic to pandemonium in the streets

It went political. Cries of prejudice turned to protests, rallies turned to riots. Oppression became the rage against the system. Police stations were burned and there were marches to *defund* the officers who *defend* their community.

There were movements with massive mask-less protestors led by politicians who the same week told churches in our State they could only gather with 100 or less and would soon tell us we couldn't sing or chant like protestors.

Massive crowds packed Floyd's funeral 2 days after 100 of us met outside. After 2.5 months of church shut down, is it coincidence cities burn down?

Under a Covid radar was flying something else that wasn't yet unmasked.

Last summer churches began jumping on a bandwagon they thought was headed to put out the fires of racism and division. But instead of firemen on that bandwagon, there were arsonists and anarchists spraying gas on the fire

Many good-intentioned people thought they joined a good movement to be bridge-builders but they found themselves surrounded by brick-throwers.

Many went with the flow for racism, but not for the revolution's waterfall. Even pastors got swept away in the current downstream to rapids and rocks.

Some marched with those who consider white male Christians as oppressors

The oppression question has been answered by overthrow, by Marxism and communism-socialism. Today a cultural form on a platform of antiracism.

Here's how one black writer explains the history of the 19th-20th century: 'Conflict theory was developed by Karl Marx to describe—in his mind—the economic relationship—or class struggle—between the oppressor (bourgeoisie) and the oppressed (proletariate)... Gramsci expanded Marx's conflict theory from a merely economic or class struggle to a cultural and social dominance oppressors have over the oppressed. In this cultural hegemony, Gramsci describes—in his mind—how oppressors maintain control over the oppressed by manipulating them into accepting oppressive principles and practices... the Frankfurt School... developed a philosophy called critical theory to analyze how cultural hegemony manipulates oppressed people from becoming conscious about their oppression... [then in 1980s critical *race* theory that says] all our institutions are systemically racist and...white people are naturally or socially inclined to maintain their oppressive power and privilege over non-white people. They believe our political systems, educational systems, traditional families, and churches are white supremacist--and they won't rest until they destroy and reshape them³

Critical race theory has dominated higher education and now is at all levels.

Anyone feel like you had to learn a whole new vocabulary this last year?

I remember feeling like I woke up to a different America and waking up to what "woke" means (more on that later). Having both a black and white son I've been having many different conversations this last year than past years.

Several of you have told me of conversations you've had with your sons or daughters or extended family over these issues that get very heated, because you're not woke or with it. Some of you are in tension now or aren't talking with someone you love because of how you answer this oppression question

So before we go forward in ch 5 I want to go back to ch 1-4 for this subject:

Ch 1 – We need wisdom in how we interact

Ch 2 – All partiality and prejudice must end

Ch 3 – It's about God's image and one race

Ch 4 – Grace transforms from the inside out

For point # 1, look at James 1, v 5: *'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him'*

#1 We Need Wisdom in How We Interact. We need to ask God for wisdom.

Do you feel you lack wisdom addressing this cultural revolution? James 1:5

One pastor sums up the woke movement answer to the oppression question: 'even if your ancestors were themselves poor subsistence farmers who *never oppressed anyone*, if other members of your ethnic group did, you are made to bear the guilt for ... what your ancestors have done... you must confess the guilt you bear by kneeling and reciting the prescribed confession [last summer literally in streets, genuflecting or lying prostrate]. And if you don't do this... dissent from the [woke movement] intensifies the criminality you inherited when you were born into the wrong ethnic group.

[Their cancel culture] will do everything they can to make sure you are shunned by polite society... scold and harass you publicly, relentlessly, trying to get you fired from your job... this is a religion that has no doctrine of atonement, no concept of forgiveness, and no possibility of real redemption. The recent demonstrations and riots made clear that no matter how frequently they use the word, reconciliation is not the real goal ...[It's a revolution] deliberately designed to provoke conflict, prolong resentment, and foster bitterness between different ethnicities. It encourages people to be offended by things that never actually happened to them—while blaming others for sins they did not actually commit. It doles out guilt and shame rather than grace and redemption. Though it is promoted by people who say they oppose ethnic strife, it is a blatantly racist worldview, condemning entire ethnic groups for sins that were committed generations ago...'⁴

In other words, you'll be oppressed if you don't believe America oppresses minorities in all its systems and society. If you don't own your oppressor status and oppose the systemic injustice by activism, you'll be opposed and be sent to the back of the bus. The anti-police mob seems to have its own PC police ready to cite and arrest us. The oppressor? Us with lighter skin, and especially us men who believe in biblical marriage and biological sex. It's not the sin of James 5 that makes you an oppressor, it's your skin color, sexuality, identity. If darker skin, female or LGBTQIA+ you're oppressed.

The oppression spectrum is the defining category of the woke worldview

READ 1:19ff. Note how to respond to friends or family caught up in this.

Note that anger doesn't bring about God's righteousness / justice (anger of anarchists but also anger toward them doesn't bring about righteousness).

Samuel Sey, a black brother at www.slowtowrite.com : "I made a vow to become quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger—slow to write."⁵

Exactly 1 year ago today he wrote a blog about 'one of the most popular slogans from protestors ... "silence is violence, silence is compliance." ...

The slogan has been repeated and retweeted by many people, including Christians, to compel others into speaking out against perceived systemic racism [in light of the footage of Floyd's death] ... However ... If the slogan is true—if silence is violence, if silence is compliance—then what the Bible describes as wisdom is foolishness. And especially: if silence is violence, if silence is compliance—Jesus is a sinner [at His unjust trial] ...

The Bible says... we shouldn't open our mouths if we haven't first listened carefully and judged righteously. After all, there's a time to be silent, and a time to speak (Ecclesiastes 3:7). Silence over injustice isn't a sin—not unless the silence is a result of fear or apathy... At the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, Israel was colonized and exploited by the Roman Empire. The Romans systemically oppressed Israel by forcing them to pay severely high income taxes that forced 90% of Israel's population into poverty... [Jesus] remained silent about the Roman Empire's oppressive system against Israel

... he didn't speak out against Herod Antipa's injustices either [even as he] murdered John the Baptist... it's a shame so many Christians are forgetting we're much more than activists for a cause—we're ambassadors for Christ ... I'm a pro-life advocate... I know we Christians have a responsibility to affirm justice in a culture that labels evil as good and injustice as justice. Nevertheless, we're not only called to open our mouths, we're also called to open ears—so we can be quick to listen and slow to speak.¹⁶

If you want to read more for wisdom on how to interact, slowtowrite.com

James 1 tells us don't be quick to speak on things we may be ignorant about or in ways that can come across insensitive to brothers whatever their color. We need to listen to other's experiences (6/2020 YAG study on website).

READ ALSO 3:15-18 ON WORLD'S WISDOM VS. GOD'S. COMMENT

Ch 1 – We need wisdom in how we interact (more in future message)

#2 – All partiality and prejudice must end

READ JAMES 2 - COMMENT

Could this apply to partiality by vaccination – “you sit here in a good seat”?
What about judging by externals who's an oppressor / racist by skin color?

NOTE 2:9 QUOTES FROM LEV 19, TURN TO LEV 19 FOR CONTEXT

READ LEV 19:9-10 – COMMENT

V. 13-18 – COMMENT

V. 35-36 – IMAGE OF LADY JUSTICE, BLINDFOLD VS. CT

Illustration of TNT discussion on **Luka Doncic** being called **white boy
Reverse racism is real and is wrong, too – it's about sin, not skin color!

Next week we'll finish part 2 and these last 2 points

Ch 3 – It's about God's image and one race

Ch 4 – Grace transforms from the inside out

CONCLUSION: GOSPEL (LET'S END WHERE WE BEGAN, JAMES 5)

We should also think of someone else in 5:6. Look at James 5:6. Can you think of a righteous man condemned and put to death and who did not resist? On the cross His cry reached all the way to heaven. And He hears the cries of all His children who are unjustly treated because He Himself was unjustly treated in Jesus Christ. In the day of slaughter, He went silently, as a sheep going to the slaughter. He was oppressed and He was afflicted and yet did not open His mouth. He didn't resist. He was condemned in court in an unfair trial and effectively sentenced to death, all to bring reconciliation and life to all who believe. The One who had unlimited riches in heaven willingly became poor (not even having a place to lay his head) for us!

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

He lived for 30 years as a working class laborer in a poor village among Jews who were oppressed and persecuted by the racist Roman ruling class.

Jesus was executed by the wealthy and influential. But now all who are poor in spirit, all who know they cannot pay their way to heaven and can never earn or deserve God's grace, if they repent and trust in Him as Lord.

Jesus didn't say "workers of the world unite and fight, throw off the yoke of the Romans, I'll give you revolution." He says something far better "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you." He gives forgiveness. He redeems us not by perishable gold and silver, but by the imperishable precious priceless lifeblood of Jesus Christ! Ephesians 2:4 *But God, being **rich in mercy**, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show **the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.***

What a beautiful and wonderful Savior we have, Amen?

It's better to have Jesus that worldly riches or reputation.

We don't need our culture's applause, let's be faithful to Christ's cause.

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/tulsa-race-massacre/>

² <https://nypost.com/2021/04/10/inside-blm-co-founder-patrisse-khan-cullors-real-estate-buying-binge/>

³ <https://slowtowrite.com/what-is-critical-race-theory/>

⁴ <https://teampyro.blogspot.com/2020/06/wokeness-is-hateful-religion.html>

⁵ <https://slowtowrite.com/the-future-of-my-blog/>

⁶ <https://slowtowrite.com/if-silence-is-violence-jesus-is-a-sinner/>