

**Season 2, Episode 8: James: Grace that shapes our plans & prosperity**  
**(4:13-5:6)**

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**Sarah:** Welcome to two sisters and a cup of tea. My name is Sarah and I live in the UK. And this is my sister Felicity and she lives in the US. Hello, everyone. How are you, Sarah?

**Felicity:** All okay?

**Sarah:** I'm well, thank you. I've got a hot squash in my mouth today, which for the American listeners is basically hot juice, apple and mango flavor. Very tasty. The best. It always goes down well with any visitors in our house, really.

**Felicity:** Apple and mango, that would not be in my top three. Just well, I actually have a giant bottle of Ribena upstairs and I have been introducing it to every American that walks through the house. Pretty much having to explain the squash aspect. And they're not as pleased with it as I would like. Is Rabina is it just a nostalgia? Is it a bit like the Jamie Dodger that you kind of think, it's so good? It's so good, isn't it? I don't really remember us having it very much at home when we feel like it was treated.

**Sarah:** Yes. I don't think we were allowed. I think it had too much shadow in it.

**Felicity:** Yeah. And I do see that, actually, as I give it to you. You can see it quite quickly.

**Sarah:** Now, last time you were saying your friend was having making British biscuits. How far has she got on her endeavors?

**Felicity:** Well, I know that there are some in the pipeline, but I have yet to yet to receive any more. So I'm just running with the classic malted milk to go with my classic Yorkshire Gray in my shop.

**Sarah:** I think it would be quite hard to make a malted milk, to be fair, to get that cow shaped or imprinted on the biscuit. That's a big ask.

**Felicity:** I know. Without it anyway, there are various aspects of that which are hard. We were talking when we say about how it can feel like you can't sit down and chat Bible unless you have the perfect scenario, as in quiet, calm, enough time, and we're thinking maybe we should burst that bubble. Can you help us?

**Sarah:** Let's burst the bubble. Because this is fairly unusual for us to have time like this where we don't have interruptions. This is carefully crafted so that our children don't burst in on us. But actually, most of life it does not look like this. And I think that's just a helpful thing to point out, isn't it? But actually, as busy mums or just as people who have a number of things going on in life. Getting the Bible looking with someone is never going to be easy to do. And I read it somewhere a couple of years ago. You always have to get creative if you're going to prioritize getting the buyer for yourself or with other people, too. And I think Lockdown for us in the UK has really taught us that over the last year. And I actually can't sit down with a cup of tea and read the Bible. We've got to do it on our walks. We've got to know our Bible to be able to metaphorically open it up on our walks. I remember when our youngest was a baby and I was reading with a student and every time I thought, great, he's going to come around at that time, it's going to be perfect, we're going to have a really good time in the Word. And every time he would not sleep. And so it's juggling at the same time. It's trying to write, read the Bible with her. And I was just like, oh, this is awful, it's going so badly. But you know what? She left the end of that year and her main comment to me was, thanks for just sharing life with me. And I just thought, that's what it's about.

**Felicity:** And I think that's really helpful, isn't it? Because as we're opening up the Bible in the midst of our normal cluttered like disrupted lives, that is the word in action. Literally, the things that we're talking about, actually, they can relate to the potential chaos that is going

on around us. I think that's right. I'm not being too bothered about if you've got children kind of running around or if it fits and it's okay to put on a TV show for 20 minutes for both sets of kids while you get a chance to feed your souls in the Word. I think, as you say, being creative and not being too precious about. You need absolute silence and we need to study Bible out and we need this, that and the other.

**Sarah:** And it's helpful for our children to see that we prioritize doing this with our friends, isn't it? This is actually a really good thing to open the Word with other people and for them to see that and to say, you know what, we're going to chat for ten minutes right now. You guys go and play for ten minutes and then you'll have our attention or whatever. As we talk about that, let's get into quite a tough part of James. I mean, I know that most of James is spelled this is a hard hitting passage in a different kind of way today. I think. So, Felicity, would you like to read it for us?

**Felicity:** Absolutely. So we're reading chapter four, verse 13. I think it's maybe worth saying before we read. There's a bit of a shift in tone, isn't it? James, he doesn't use brothers and sisters. He's talking about a different crowd of people. He's describing different people outside of the church family at this stage, just before everyone gets a bit anxious as to whether they're in this picture. So, verse 13. Now listen, you who say today or tomorrow will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, if it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that. As it is you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. If anyone then knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. Now listen, you rich people weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look the wages you fail to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self indulgence. You have fastened yourself in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the innocent one who was not opposing you.

**Sarah:** Wow. Yeah. It's big language, isn't it? So the reason we know it's not written to brothers and sisters at this point is, well, partly because it doesn't say brothers and sisters. He normally starts every new section with the brothers and sisters, doesn't he? You see the two repeated now listen. Now listen. And it's directed to a general you in verse 13 and then you rich people in verse one of chapter five. Although he's writing to his brothers and sisters, he's writing about unbelievers to warn the brothers and sisters.

**Felicity:** Yes. That's really helpful, Sarah. Really clear. Yes, absolutely. And as we read it, then, as believers, we are paying heed to the warning and as ever with our doublemindedness, we might just see kind of inclinations in ourselves here. But that does not mean that we are in this category, because he is talking about judgment a fair bit here, isn't he? So let's remember the grace of the first half, chapter four, that is lifting us up even as we see our doublemindedness may be evidenced here.

**Sarah:** Yeah. So how does he kick us off, then in this?

**Felicity:** I think there's two different groups of people on there. So 13 through to 17 describes these, what he calls people with arrogant schemes. So it seems that there's a kind of arrogance of like, well, I'm in charge and I'm going to decide what happens. It's totally in my hands as to whether we go to that city, spend a year here, carry on business, make money. My life is my life and I'm going to decide what happens with it. And no one has any say in that apart from me and Jane burst that bubble pretty quickly. Why do you not even know what will happen tomorrow? That's true, isn't it? We have no idea what will happen tomorrow. Like here in Illinois weather. I don't even know whether I should be wearing a coat tomorrow or a T shirt, but even something as simple as that. But then he says, what is your life? You are a mist. That's pretty humbling, isn't it?

**Sarah:** Yes. And he's taking that straight from a proverb I know as I'm continuing on in my proverbs in the mornings. I read that a couple of days ago and I was like, it's kind of ecclesiastic language but also proverbs as well. And what struck me is that what is your life? You are amiss. It's kind of sandwiched in the middle of what he's saying they're up to

the kind of pride of what they're up to and just kind of carrying on in their business, dictating their ways, how they think the world should run and what they think will happen, the worries of life. You are a misty is sandwiched between that and then his kind of analysis of that is saying actually you're just boasting in your arrogant schemes that it's full of puffed up pride. And actually, as he says, all such boasting is evil. So I think it's just really striking that it really stands out that kind of sentence. What is your life? You are a missed. Yeah, that's it. That's the verdict of attitude, isn't it? Yeah.

**Felicity:** The stark reality of this is actually the reality, whatever you think, however you're behaving, that actually has no bearing on the fact that you are a mist. And the temporary nature of that, isn't it? Pride is I feel like a big part of pride is trying to create a legacy or trying to be more than we are or kind of lift ourselves up. And actually as we see the temporary mist likeness of a human, then the pride has no impact on that. We can't change how long we live for.

**Sarah:** And I guess this follows straight on then in what we've just been seeing about humble yourself before the Lord. Like what else could possibly hung you then realizing that you're like a shadow, you're like a breath. We're nothing before the Lord. This is the essence of humility, isn't it? And yet he's saying, he's kind of describing these unbelievers who are doing exactly the opposite.

**Felicity:** And linking on with what you were saying about the humility that we saw last week and the friendship with the world being the big warning from last week. And I think here we do see a kind of outplaying of what it is to be of the world, this mindset and this way of thinking, this kind of explains the world around us, doesn't it? I feel like I see that with my unbelieving friends quite a lot. The perspective is the big difference as to whether you're acknowledging God to be in charge or not. So while this is a warning, I think it's also really helpful just to help me understand. Of course, if you're not going to acknowledge God, then this is how you would think. You do think your boss, that you're in charge.

**Sarah:** Yeah. And the heart of it is the arrogant scheme, isn't it? So I think this again has ever changed, going straight to heart, isn't it? Because it's not just saying, right, if I tag on, if the Lord will bits my plans, then actually I'm fine, I'm covered on this. Actually. If the heart of my plans are arrogant schemes that deny the Lord's existence and deny his sovereign will over my life, that's a problem. And that's where I'm more friends with the world than I am with Jesus at this point. So I think that's where we need to kind of see the warning for our own hearts and to go, am I being divided in this?

**Felicity:** Yes. And I think that's really helpful too. It's not just about saying if it is the Lord's will, but actually what is it? Am I actually really believing and trusting that this is in the Lord's hands? And so does my prayer life reflect that? Does what I do before I make decisions, how I talk about what I'm doing, those kind of things? I think the functionality of what it is to not think like this. Yeah, I think that's really helpful.

**Sarah:** So then we get on to this next part of the letter which approaches the rich people. And it's interesting because back in chapter two we had the brothers and sisters were kind of doing a favor to the rich people, weren't they? It seems there's a connection between those. They were kind of elevating showing favor to. And now actually, we're really seeing the extent of who these people are. And it's terrifying, actually.

**Felicity:** It's shocking, isn't it? And I remember it was shocking when we're reading the favoritism passage, that these people are the people who are persecuting the church, people within the church, and yet they're the people that they're seeking to show favor to. And here we get more insight into what they're like and it is the very fact that they're called the rich people. And I think the heart of what they're about is dependency on their riches, on the perishable gold and silver. And the description is really kind of severe, isn't it? The corroded gold and silver and that corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. The idea that you would think that this is going to save you, that this is going to sort you out, you just need to get rich and that's all you need. And as we put on the heavenly perspective as we lose double mindedness and look at this wisely with the God mindset, then actually it doesn't make any sense at all because that's not what lifts you up as we've seen in chapter four. It's God who lifts you up.

**Sarah:** Well, I think it's what they do with the wealth, isn't it? Actually, I don't think the wealth itself is the crux of the issue. I think the crime is they're hoarding it. So in verse

three, they've hoarded it in the last days and the extravagance of it and the injustice. So the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty and they're fattening themselves. They're living on earth in luxury and self indulgence and yet it's saying you've condemned and murdered the innocent so that they are trampling on. Vulnerable in order to pass themselves up and to get what they want for their lives without any regard for the people who are being trampled on in the process.

**Felicity:** Isn't that a beautiful thing that the Lord Almighty does hear the cries of those who are being trampled on? We see that throughout the Bible, don't we? But I love that reminder that he is a compassionate listening God. It reminds me of Exodus when he's enslaved in Egypt and they're crying out and God does hear and you think that's true all the way through to now.

**Sarah:** And this phrase, the Lord Almighty like this is a very specific in the ESP version, I think it's Lord of Host, isn't it? It's a very specific description of the Lord as the one who wages war to defend the defenseless. He has got their back, even though it doesn't look like it right now, in the end, justice will be done. Yeah, that's good news, it's really good news but it's shocking nonetheless to see this going on. And I guess, again, the warning for us is don't even think about going in this direction like the brothers and sisters there, these are the ones you're favoring. Don't go in that direction. See what a nightmare they're causing and what judgment for them will look like, but also the believers don't think about it. Don't go there.

**Felicity:** I agree, absolutely don't go there. But then also just examine what we're involved in in society. You were talking about this earlier, a little bit about that idea that maybe we are part of taking advantage of people and exploiting people without even realizing it. I don't know what clothes we buy or how our food is produced or all sorts of ways. It's quite sobering, isn't it, that this is how seriously God takes that. And so just to be involved in justice rather than injustice and that matches with 417 to 18 the picture of Jesus who was for the justice for the week, for those who are opposed.

**Sarah:** And it matches back to chapter one when he says true religion is this, that you look after orphans and widows, in their distress, keep oneself from being polluted by the world like he is. Fleshing out what it looks like to have true living faith by referring to unbelievers and what's going on there, but also warning our hearts in the process.

**Felicity:** Yeah. So it shines a spotlight back on our own hearts, doesn't it? I love that about James, though, because I think by nature I'm quite wordy. I kind of, like, read things and work it out. And as you well know, Sarah, but the Wordiness that actually is very active, it hits the road in reality, doesn't it? So we can't just secrete ourselves away into the kind of Bible reading. We're just all about the Bible, actually. You read the Bible and you do listen to it. And to be wise, to not be doubleminded, is to listen to what James is saying here and actually in action. Like when we had Sam on when he was talking about the embodied faith. I think that is really pertinent here.

**Sarah:** Yeah. And it's back to chapter one again, isn't it? Like, don't just be hearing the word be do is like actually action what you're hearing, isn't it? I love that we're just seeing he's got so many pity phrases, isn't he? And we're just like seeing them all the way through. You can have fleshed out and they continue to challenge our hearts in it. And as ever, it's good for us to hear it and to act on it. Will you pray for us to see that we would be those who don't just hear it?

**Felicity:** Absolutely. Father, we praise you. That you are a God of compassion, you're a God of justice, that you're a God who doesn't let these things go. Father, we pray that we would be those who really do look to you, acknowledge you. Please forgive us for any arrogant schemes we have or any injustices we're involved in them. And Father, we pray that as we hear Your Word, would we be very much doers of it. Please help us to be wise in the way that we live. Guard us against double mindedness. And as we heed this warning, please would we run towards Jesus above all else. Amen.

**Sarah:** Amen.

**Felicity:** It's quite sobering, isn't it, this passage? I feel like it's like it's quite weighty.

**Sarah:** Yeah, it is good if the Lord will it. We'll meet next time for another podcast episode.

**Felicity:** Well, this has been good.

**Sarah:** See you soon.

**Felicity:** All right.

**Sarah:** Bye, everyone. Bye bye.

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