

## **The Book of James – Chapter 5** **(James 2:17,18)**

**Introduction:** In this final chapter James deals with the haves and the have nots; the rich and the poor. It seems there really wasn't a middle class back in Roman occupied Israel. James tells the rich and poor alike the truth about their circumstances and how God sees it all. There is also taught the power of prayer and faith in prayer. There are sick that can be healed and mountains moved by the righteous man's prayers, which is an amazing ending to an extremely practical book.

### **Key Verses – James 5:8,16**

**Vs.1** – *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.*

There is that phrase again, "Go to now..." meaning come on now and pay attention, I have something to say. It's not wrong to be neither rich nor to be poor: but the poor would love to be rich, and I cannot say the same for the rich, wanting to trade places with the poor. Though it is not wrong to be rich, it can be wrong how you treat God, and how you treat others. Apparently the rich were mistreating both relationships; both with God and men. Their future seemed to be one of weeping, howling and misery! **1Timothy 6:10** *For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* A life without God! It is the rich man's attitude toward his riches that is the problem James is dealing with, not the riches themselves. Jesus gave us two parables and a true story to help us understand the proper relationship to riches.

- **Luke 12:13-21**- Better to be rich toward God! Don't be a fool!
- **Luke 16:1-13**- Teaches us about the wisdom and faithfulness lacking in Christians.
- **Luke 16:19-31** – A rich man and a beggar die; and one goes to paradise the other to hell. One fared sumptuously in his life and the other ate the crumbs from the rich man's table. It seems the rich man had some responsibility in the poor man's condition. Why? Because the rich man went to hell which reveals the way God judged these two lives.

I would also include in this the fact that the book of James was written around 50 AD. It was only a short 20 years later that Jerusalem was ransacked and destroyed by Titus and his Roman army. There was not a rich man left in Jerusalem after this destruction.

**Vs.2** - *Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.*

*"Your riches are corrupted"* Corrupted means, to cause to rot, to destroy. The reference here is to their hoarded treasures; and the idea is, that they had accumulated more than they

needed for their own use; and that, instead of giving them to do good to others, or helping them in any useful way, they kept them until they rotted or spoiled. You see in these days it wasn't coins and notes that made up a person's wealth but things that could corrupt or perish like: clothing, grain, or oil.

*"Your garments are moth-eaten"* What happens to clothing that sits for years never worn or utilized in some way? It dry rots. It is eaten by insects. You find the clothes that are hoarded and are not worn become unwearable. **Matt.6:19-21**

**Vs.3** - *Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.*

Just how does gold and silver rust? Well it's because you are going to decay! The judgment that comes upon a godless rich man is his own death. From the parables we looked at, that is exactly what happened? A rich man will be separated from his wealth. **Illus:** One of the richest families in the world was and maybe still is, is the Vanderbilt's. When one of them was dying, the family waited in an outer room. The doctor and lawyer came out and the question was asked first "How much did he leave?" The lawyer replied "He left it all. He didn't take any with him." Think about what the man said as he was led around a great nobleman's estate." All this and heaven would be noble but all this and hell would be terrible."

James is condemning the godless rich men. Their wealth is here today and gone tomorrow. A man who loves money is never satisfied. It is like drinking sea water, the more you drink the thirstier you become. You make one million you want two million. You don't have to be rich to have that very attitude. It is a matter of contentment. You can make millions and find yourself never happy or content. **Phil.4:11-13** There was Howard Hughes who spent the waning days of his life as a recluse and a sick man. J. Paul Getty said all his wealth could not give him one happy marriage. My friend instead of hoarding our wealth we should benefit someone else when we have the chance.

I think the thrust of these verses is our focus on eternity. There was a farmer who cared little for God and plowed his fields on Sunday, sowed his seed, and reaped the harvest all on Sunday. He bragged about in October's harvest he brought in more than those who loved the Lord and obeyed Him. One man upon hearing that statement reminded the godless farmer that God doesn't always settle His accounts in October; there is all of eternity.

**Vs.4** - *Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.*

Interesting, in that God will judge not only what we do with our money but how we

made our money. It seems evident by the verse that fraud was involved with the hire of the men who worked for these rich men. The labourer was not being paid properly. God is well aware of how we handle our dealings with others. Think about Lazarus laid at that rich man's gate; in that God put that man to be care for but that is not what happened. Lazarus only ate crumbs from the man's table and was not cared for health wise. **Proverbs 22:7** *The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.* There will be no hiding place for those who are pierced through with many sorrows as the scripture says; seeing that the cries of defrauded men is heard by the Lord of hosts! Rich defraud the workers! **Deut.24:14,15**

**Vs.5** - *Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.*

The rich here are rebuked and uncovered for their selfish desires. They lived for pleasure and cared not for how they got their wealth. Their lifestyle was on the backs of others with no care for them. They "lived in pleasure". **Luke 12:19; 16:19** The Bible says they were wanton in their living, with no boundaries but only indulging themselves in every lust of their hearts. It was a life lived for themselves with no thought of others. Every day was like the days of slaughter. Possibly to mean they just fattened themselves like gluttons with no care about tomorrow. As in the day of sacrifice so much was feasted upon in the day of the animals slaughter; so were these rich men feasting without thought that their judgment was coming.

**Vs.6** - *Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.*

These rich men have punished wrongly good men, and suffered no resistance from them. They killed for their own profit with no regard for human life. This may have reference to the fact that Jesus Christ Himself was that Just One who was killed and He didn't resist. Also, though there were many who treated very harshly who were what we would call good men. These ones who were killed could not or would not resist and possibly could have been too weak and feeble to fight back. The sins, therefore, that are condemned in these first 6 verses are these four:

- That of hoarding up money when it was unnecessary for their real needs and comfort, and when they might do so much good with it, they didn't. **Matt.6:19**
- That of keeping back the wages which was due to those who worked their fields; that are, keeping back what would be a fair wages for their work; treated like slaves.
- That of giving themselves up to a life of ease, luxury, and sensual; indulgence.
- That of wronging and oppressing good and just men. Men, perhaps in their more humble life, were unable to fight for their rights, and who had none to help them. Men who were too feeble to offer any resistance, or who were restrained by their principles from attempting it.

Needless to say that there are multitudes of such people now on the earth, that have or are

treating people the same way and will be judged.

**Vs.7** - *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.*

James is making it very clear that they lived then, and we live now in a big, bad, dog eat dog world. What are we to do? Be patient! The Lord is going to straighten it all out. Everyone will get a fair shake in that Millennial Kingdom. The Bible says in **Isaiah 11:4** *But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.* Jesus Christ is coming back to set up His Kingdom here on earth. That will take place after the Rapture of the bride of Christ and then the seven year Tribulation. We find the rapture in **1Thess.4:13-18; 1Cor.15:51-54** and the Tribulation in **Daniel 9:24-27**

So patience must be the attitude of the folks in James' day and today. Wait on the Lord and trust Him. The Lord waits in the face of opposition toward Him and His ways. God is waiting for the harvest to come in, in its fullness. There was in James' day and even today in Israel an early and latter rain. One rain came in the spring months at planting time and the autumn months preceding the harvest. The Lord is patient as He waits for the fruit of those last souls to be saved before the age of grace comes to an end at the rapture.

**Vs.8** - *Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

To **stablish** means fix, settle permanently, to make firm! Let your lives be firmly rooted and grounded in this simple but wonderful truth that Jesus Christ the Lord is coming again. Let that certain future event be our focus to keep us trusting and depending on the Lord and be patient.

**Vs.9** - *Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.*

We must not let the present conditions whether they are favourable to us or not prompt us to grudge against our fellow Christians. If we find ourselves moaning, complaining, and murmuring against one of our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord we need to stop it and resolve it immediately. That may be confessing your own impatient and prideful heart to the Lord; or going to your brother and sister and resolve it before Satan gains an even greater stranglehold on your heart. But there is an even greater reason to not hold grudges or judge our fellow Christians, and that is that our Judge stands at the door. We soon enough, will stand at the Judgement Seat of Jesus Christ.

**Vs.10** - *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.*

Brethren it is as simple as this; James gives us an example of those that have suffered affliction and were patient to the end. **Matt.23:33-35** Wow, what am I complaining about instead of patiently waiting on and trusting God.

**Vs.11** - *Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

It is good to endure or trust God through the hard times. We can read of the patience of Job in the sense that he seemed to trust God through some of the most gut wrenching times that anyone could suffer. Job not only showed patience but learned patience of which we have read about. Also, we know that the Lord is pitiful or full of compassion. **Lamentations 3:22,23** *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.* We see in the verse about the Lord's tender mercy and He has an abundance. **Psalms 103:4** *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;* **Psalms 145:9** *The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

**Vs.12** - *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*

People like to make their point more strenuous by swearing on or by something. As if heaven or earth being as they are great creations of God somehow confirming truth. Our word should be always confirmed and trusted because we are men and women of character. Our yes should be yes and no, no with no wavering back and forth. When you make a decision it should be after some careful consideration and then let it stand. **Heb.6:16-18** tells us that men do seek to show their trustworthiness by what they swear on. God on the other hand is holy and righteous in all His attributes can only swear by His own oath which is immutable. It is apparent than some people could have their hand on a stack of Bibles and still not tell the truth. Character and integrity rule the day! **Matt.5:34-37** Swearing is not necessary if we would just follow through on our word. Honesty, and integrity with pure and simple truth need not be dressed up.

**Vs.13** - *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.*

There are two states we can find ourselves and one is to be afflicted - **Psalms 34:4; 107:6,13, 28**. What are we told to do? Pray! Is it not natural to go to the Lord when we find ourselves up to our necks in distresses and afflictions? When the hard times come go to the Lord and ask for His strength and help.

The other state we may find ourselves is to be merry - **Prov.15:13, 15; 17:22** When things are going well and everyone seems to be agreeable and pleasant, why not sing and be joyful. Let your heart sing the songs that the Lord has put in our mouths. New songs, not the old songs of the lost. **Psalm 40:3** *And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.* **Eph.5:18-20**

**Vs.14** - *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:*

Now, James tells us if someone is sick in the church they should ask the elders to pray for them. This isn't a cold or flu we are talking about, but a serious condition possibly bordering on death. In this kind of condition or affliction the elders in the church should make earnest prayer for the one afflicted. I want to be as practical with this verse as I believe James is being with us. In James' day people did rub oil in their hair or face in regard to medicinal needs or to make themselves look better. As for the oil having any effect on the person's health I think it is minimal to no affect at all. I think it could turn into some kind of ritual we perform as if the anointing of oil was healing the person who was sick. Oil could be administered or it could be withheld but I really believe the oil can be applied as long as the trust is in our prayers to God Almighty to heal not the oil even with its some medicinal qualities. All of this must be done in and by the power of God and in His wonderful name. Some references to oil and anointing - **Ps.23:5; Mark 6:13 Luke 7:46; 10:34:**

**Vs.15** - *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

We are to pray for the sick and those prayers are to be in faith. Those prayers in faith trusting God and according to His will shall raise up the sick. The sick can be healed by real prayer in faith toward God. The will of God be done! **Isaiah 38:1-5**. If there are sins in this person's life they can be forgiven also. The sick person's lifestyle (which may be against or away from God) could certainly cause them to be weak, and sickly. **1Cor.11:27-32** Also ref. **Matt.9:2; John 5:14**

**Vs.16** - *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

We are to keep good relationships with each other in the church. That is what is being said to us here; to confess our faults to each other not our sins. You cannot forgive my sins nor can I forgive your sins accept they be directed at me. The idea here is that strife and grudges against each other causes sickness and we should be praying for each other and loving each other as children of God. When we hold onto unconfessed sins and hold grudges against our brother and sisters we may certainly get physically sick. **Psalm 32:3** *When I kept silence, my*

*bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. **Psalm 51:8** Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*

James then lets us know that the effectual fervent prayer works. God hears the prayer of men and women who get down to heartfelt prayers of faith. Pointed specific zealous praying gets the ear of our God.

**Vs.17** - *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

Elijah is sampled here as a man who was just like us in his passions and he prayed it wouldn't rain for 3 ½ years and it didn't rain. How can that be? It was an effectual and fervent prayer, and it did avail much. It did not rain again until Elijah prayed again. Wouldn't you like to see results like that in relation to your prayers? I believe it to be very helpful to all of us to see that Elijah had his ups and down and like us he was a sinner. But, if we get right with the Lord and are deeply moved to pray for something and stay at it till God answers I believe we too can see amazing answers to prayer.

**Vs.18** - *And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

Well what do we see 3 ½ years later; rain. That's God's power displayed because a man prayed into the will of God. **1Kings 18:42-46** The earth brought forth her fruit again.

**Vs.19** - *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;*

People can fall away from the truth doctrinally or just go into a life of sin , of which we should do our level best to turn them back to the straightway. This does not mean "convert him as a lost sinner, or regenerate him," but turn him from the error of his way; bring him back from his sinful ways; re-establish him in the truth of the word of God. It simply means to turn one around from the direction they are heading.

**Vs.20** -*Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

I believe this verse is talking to Christians. The verse preceding says "*Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth*" meaning James' fellow Jewish Christians scattered abroad as we read in **James 1:1**. My belief is that when we as Christians help a fellow Christian get back on the straight and narrow, then, that in itself will save this sinner from a multitude of sins he may have committed; if left to himself. There is not a doubt that a life away from God even by a Christian brings the same results in that **Rom.6:23** "*...the wages of sin is death.*" So what is our duty as Christians? **Gal.6:1,2** *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye*

*one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

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