

James 5:1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

James 5:2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

James 5:3 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.

I think James is talking here to those who are “rich” according to worldly standards; those who have an abundance of money and material things. He is saying that the day is coming when your wealth will be worthless to you. The fact that you have stored so much for so long, thinking you were preparing for the last days, will come back to haunt you. You let the money and material decay rather than use it for good to help your fellowman. Once you get to the end of your days, you will find out that worldly wealth is worthless—and you sure can’t take it with you.

“Eat your flesh as it were fire” – That seems to tell me that all the hard work and energy you put into amassing this wealth will contribute to your physical decline and ability to enjoy even the earthly benefits of your wealth. (Obviously, I think he is referring to the wealthy who are not committed to the Lord. I believe there are wealthy people who love the Lord, but because of the “love of money” and position and power, those who truly use their wealth to honor God are few as compared to the whole.)

James 5:4 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.

Evidently, the wealth of these rich people has been gotten at the expense of others—through unfair labor practices and unfair wage scales. Even though you may have gotten by with these practices through the use and/or manipulation of “legal” means, it has not gone unnoticed by God; He hears the cries, the pleas for help from the mistreated workforce. God’s word is full of His concern for the treatment of the widows, orphans, elderly, weak, poor etc. The Greek for the word “sabaoth” means armies, a military epithet of God. I think maybe this is implying that no matter how wealthy and powerful you may think you are, you are going directly against the will of the God of the armies of heaven who have ALL power and wealth when you mistreat your fellowman for your own profit.

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

James 5:6 Ye have condemned *and* killed the just; *and* he doth not resist you.

James continues his commentary on the life of the “rich and famous.” The Greek word for *pleasure* talks about living a life of luxury and indulgence. The Greek for the word *wanton* adds the idea of *riotous* (unrestrained, in excess) living and *lewdness* (promiscuous indulgence of lusts). These people have the wherewithal to fulfill their fleshly desires and don’t hesitate to use it. I think that is to what the second half of the verse is referring. Just as one might indulge in gluttony on a day of celebration after slaughtering a special pig or cow, they are nourishing the desires of their hearts with whatever luxury or indulgence possible. It seems that they have falsely condemned and even killed the just/innocent in the

process of amassing their wealth; they have used whatever means necessary to get what they wanted. (The first story that comes to my mind is that of Ahab's desire for Naboth's vineyard and Jezebel's ruse at getting it—I Kings 21.)

At first it seemed like this section was just thrown in here without following the context from chapter four; but as I look back over the last three verses of chapter four, they make a very neat transition to this chapter. James was talking about resisting the devil and humbling ourselves before the Lord. He goes on to talk about speaking evil of the brethren and reminding us that there is one lawgiver/judge with the power to save and destroy. In light of that we should watch how we live since our lives are but for a short time, and we don't know what that amount of time is. Knowing that--we shouldn't boast about our successes and wealth; that is prideful/sinful; anything we may have is because of God's goodness and graciousness. Right in line with that is the thought of identifying as evil not doing what you know to be good. That is what those who are wealthy are most guilty of regarding the use of their wealth. (Instead they usually want to build bigger barns and storehouses.) This leads right into the warning to the rich. Now the mention of the mistreatment of the innocent leads him back to wanting to encourage the brethren—many of which were some of the ones being used by the rich and powerful.

James 5:7 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 5:8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

James is encouraging the brethren to be patient and persevere until the Lord comes. (They were looking for Him to come just as surely in their time as we feel He is coming in ours.) The reason the Lord has not come yet is because He is waiting (with expectation according to Greek) for a very highly prized, valuable harvest from the earth (the Greek includes the occupants of the earth). This harvest is so prized by Him that He is willing to wait however long it takes to make sure He gets the full harvest—from the very beginning of the planting season (the establishment of the church) until the very last fruit of the season has been gathered (the fullness of the gentiles; the end of the church age). We should be patient in the same way that the Lord is. The lives of our future brothers and sisters in the faith are at stake. We should fix our hearts with resolve, steadfastness and strength as we wait because the time for Him to come is getting closer and closer with each passing day.

(5/07) As I read through this again, I think I made the wrong application the first time through regarding the early and latter rain. James is writing to Jewish believers. The new covenant was established with men of faith after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jewish believers were the early rain in that they were the seed through whom the church, the body of believers who would be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, was sown. The new covenant promised to the Jewish people as a whole will be established when Jesus returns to reign as King on planet earth in Jerusalem. Truly the Lord has "long patience" in waiting for this latter rain of

faith among the Jewish people when they call for Jesus as their Messiah to come and deliver them.

Matt. 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!

Matt. 23:38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Matt. 23:39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

James 5:9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

Waiting patiently is not our /my strong suit. We have a tendency to get testy and short in our attitude with those around us. We are quick to pick up on their weaknesses and faults. (Just picture yourself in that long checkout line or in terrible rush hour traffic or waiting for that nonexistent sales person.) So James rightly warns the believers to not grudge one against another. The Greek for the word *grudge* implies groaning within oneself, sighing, murmuring, and complaining. (Again, we think we are pretty good if we just endure the frustration without saying anything hurtful in a “patience testing” situation. Bottom line is that God is looking at what is going on in our being whether we say it out loud or not. I am soooooo guilty.) It is how we act both inside and out that condemns us, and the Only True Judge will be here before we know it. He is actually witnessing the whole thing through the person of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Nothing about us is hidden from Him.

James 5:10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

James encourages the believers to remember the prophets and follow their examples. They spoke out boldly in the name of the Lord. Were they rewarded with wealth, riches, popularity etc.? No. They suffered affliction and hardship. Did this affect their obedience before the Lord? No. They endured; they trusted; they were patient—willing to wait for God’s timing and God’s purpose.

James 5:11 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.

In fact, as we look back in remembrance at the prophets we think of them as happy and blessed to have endured. We realize that they pleased God through their obedience. Job is singled out for his patience and God’s ultimate blessing on him because of it. God has a purpose for what is allowed to touch our lives. Job didn’t understand it at the time just as we often don’t understand how He is working in our lives. The key is that we should just be patient and trust Him. In the end Job was the recipient of God’s great compassion and tender mercy. I thought it was interesting when I looked up the word *tender* in Webster’s; one of the meanings was “sensible to impression and pain; one of the softer emotions.” God is sensitive to our weaknesses and shortcomings and pain. When He responded to Job after his time of testing, it was with great consideration of all that he had lost and endured. He blessed him even more abundantly than

before. Job is an encouraging example because he was rewarded while on earth as well as his future reward in heaven. Sometimes, as with many of the other prophets, we will have to be patient until that future reward when comparing ourselves to many on this earth. The key is that there is an end and a reward.

James 5:12 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.

The Greek for the word “above” means before, in front of, prior to; it doesn’t mean higher in importance than anything else—which is what I was first trying to read into it. James is just telling them not to precede any of their statements or promises by swearing either by heaven, or earth or any other thing to strengthen our oath or declaration. Your yes should mean yes, and your no should mean no. The entry for the word “condemnation” in this verse is interesting:

“acting under a feigned part, i.e. (figuratively) deceit (“hypocrisy”):—condemnation, dissimulation, hypocrisy.”

James seems to be warning us that you can set yourself up for the sin of deceit or hypocrisy by placing too much emphasis on the importance of your words in the eyes of others. The more attention you draw to yourself by placing emphasis on the importance of your words through swearing, the more likely you will be willing to do whatever is necessary to protect your “reputation.” If you just try to live as an honest person and say what you mean to begin with, it will be less traumatic and easier to admit when you slip up or make a mistake. The more the spotlight is on you, the more steps you are willing to take to ensure that your “position” and “reputation” are protected.

James 5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

James 5:14 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:

James 5:15 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.

“afflicted” = suffering evil, enduring hardship

“psalms” = to twitch or twang, i.e. to play on a stringed instrument (celebrate the divine worship with music and accompanying odes):—make melody, sing (psalms).

“sick” = weak, feeble, or diseased

“oil” = olive oil (I have always been taught that the oil represents the work of the Holy Spirit. So, I guess the anointing is an outward expression of confidence of the work and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives through the sacrifice of the Son.)

I like to look up so many words in the original because they often stretch the import of what is being said in my mind. Singing psalms can be playing the piano before the Lord—which I do more than sing nowadays. Even though it may sound like a twitch or twang to me sometimes, the Lord sees the spirit of the

heart in the process. I usually just associate the sick with the diseased, but the implication seems to include any who aren't completely healthy **and** strong.

The first observation that comes to me is that **we** are personally called to take action regarding whatever situation in which we find ourselves. **We** are to pray about our circumstances. **We** are to express our joy through praise and singing—outward expressions. If we are sick, **we** are to initiate action with the elders of the church. The question always comes to me as to why we need the assistance of anyone else with our prayers. All that Jesus is and has is at our ready through our faith in Him and the ministry of the Spirit. Maybe as in fasting, the outward action that we take is a sign of the seriousness and earnestness of our commitment. I was immediately reminded of **Matthew 18:20**, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (But we have His presence abiding in us through the Spirit as believers. So we don't need others to insure His presence in our lives.)

In the process of searching for the reference to this verse I found **Matthew 18:16**: "But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Maybe by asking these elders to join with us in prayer, we are establishing our earnest position of faith with witnesses before the Lord. It is a public declaration of our faith in His power and ability. It seems to me that it is **our faith** that determines the Lord's response--be it for healing or forgiveness. I also think that we can't have healing without forgiveness. Jesus seemed to make no separation of the acts of healing and forgiveness during His ministry. He would say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" as well as "thy faith hath made thee whole."

The hard part of this verse for me is not that Jesus has the power to heal and forgive. I am confident of that! The hard part for me is to ever pray in faith **knowing** that I am asking for God's will in the process. I am unwavering in my faith in His ability, but very wavering of my ability to discern His will and/or intent in what is being allowed in my life or someone else's. Even in looking back at Job, it was obviously God's will for him to endure before being restored. In Paul's case, it was never God's intention to remove the thorn in his flesh.

Mark Hitchcock makes application of these verses to those whose sickness is caused by sin because of the surrounding context

James 5:16 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. "faults" = a side-slip (lapse or deviation), i.e. (unintentional) error or (wilful) transgression:—fall, fault, offence, sin, trespass. "healed" = to be cured or made whole

It seems to me that James is telling believers to admit when we have faulted or offended or sinned against one another, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Then we are to pray for one another to bring about a healing (restoration, making whole) of the relationship.

“effectual” – Webster: *a.* [See Effect, *n.*] Producing, or having adequate power or force to produce, an intended effect;

Strongs: *to be at work, to work, to do:* —accomplish(1), brought about(1), effective(2), effectually worked(2), performs(1), work(7), working(2), works(7).

My paraphrase for the second half of the verse would be: The prayer of a man in right standing before the Lord has the power to effect or bring about its intended purpose and abundantly more.

James 5:17 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.

James 5:18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

Elijah is given as an example of the truth of the above verses. He was human just like we are; he had the same nature and felt the same passions that we feel. He was a man in right standing before God motivated by the desire to glorify God. When he prayed for it not to rain, it didn't rain for 3-1/2 years. In fact, it didn't rain until he prayed again and asked for God to send the rain. In both instances his prayer brought forth what he asked for in abundance. It didn't rain for a very long time; and when it did rain, it rained enough for the earth to bring forth fruit again. The implication being that we have the same power at our disposal as Elijah had.

James 5:19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

James 5:20 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.

This verse is a warning for each of us as believers. It is possible for each and every one of us to be deceived or misled regarding the truth. We are responsible for one another. We are to watch out for one another and be quick to turn one another back to the narrow path if we see a brother or sister being led astray. When we are successful in turning one back who has fallen into error or deception, we are saving that soul from death (a fatal end, death or pestilence). This death seems to refer to the physical. The sad part of a believer's death is that it eliminates any further possibility of earning heavenly rewards; it weakens the body of Christ and deprives the church of another soldier in the war against the evil one and his forces. Therein lies the significance of the restoration of the believer to the truth through the effort of the restorer. He will hide/cover a multitude of sins. He will be responsible for the prevention of what could have been great injury to the testimony of the Lord and a negative impact on the effectiveness of the body of believers. Each one of us is important to the whole. We are valued for our position in the body no matter how important or unimportant we deem that position to be.