

Topic: James Chapter 5

Setting: This part of the Epistle is focused on the misuse of riches & exhortation for patience, endurance while suffering and praying effectively.

Key Verse: "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."
(v.16)

Thought: James addresses several issues that were causing major problems in the lives of Christian families: trusting in riches while mistreating poor labourers; complaining about sufferings; being impatient about the second coming; coping with physical sickness and spiritual sin.

Verse	Notes & Questions	Comments & Answers
v.1-3	Those Christians who trusted in riches were now enduring hardships. James tells them that their gold and silver have "rusted". How would this rust be a witness against them and how will it consume their flesh?	Because trusting in riches is not enduring or beneficial for Christians – when persecuted by non-Christians/governments/religious bigots, their wealth would not save them. It would also be viewed as worldly pleasures, not spiritual values. This would bring resentment and disdain from non-wealthy Christians and charges of hypocrisy by non-Christians.
v.4-6	Another condemnation against the wealthy was their mistreating of their own workers. Apparently, when bad economic times arrived, wealthy Christians were so greedy to protect their wealth that they refused to pay their workers. What else did some of the wealthy do to poor, defenceless labourers who could not earn enough to survive or to pay their debts?	Probably these verses refer to wealthy persons throwing debtors into prison for lack of repaying their debts. They might also be forced into sell their possessions and even sell family members into slavery. Some would die of starvation making the debt holder guilty of murder. (Harsh condemnation for someone who was supposedly Christian.)
v.7-20	Practical advice for Christian living: i) Why be patient for Christ's return? ii) What can we learn from the prophets? iii) Why do we not need to swear to convince people we are telling the truth? iv. What should our response be when suffering or when cheerful? v. What should we do when we are sick? vi. Why should we do something for a sinner?	i) Because no one knows when Jesus will return so we just need to keep on living a Christian life. ii) Key lesson would be to do God's will and not be worried when trials occur. If they had problems but stayed faithful – we can too! Iii) Our reputation should be that whatever we say, others can be assured that a Christian is always telling the truth. iv. Pray and sing praises when happy. v. Pray and call on the elders. If the problem is sin, the solution is to confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. vi. Because Christians believe that sin is serious and will result in spiritual death – we must try to change a sinner from his/her behaviour to enjoy the forgiveness of Jesus!