

"THE EPISTLE OF JAMES"

Chapter Five

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THE CHAPTER

- 1) To appreciate the need for patience in times of oppression
- 2) To see the value of prayer and confessing sins in times of sickness

SUMMARY

The final chapter opens with a strong condemnation toward the rich who were oppressing the poor while living in pleasure and luxury. Most likely these were rich unbelievers such as those mentioned earlier (cf. **2:6-7**). The Lord heard the cries of those defrauded, and judgment was to come upon the rich who had condemned and murdered the just. This passage may be an allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem foretold by Jesus in Matthew 24 and fulfilled in A.D. 70. James counsels his brethren to patiently wait for the coming of the Lord, and to establish their hearts. Appealing to the farmer, the prophets, and to Job as examples of patience, he also warns against grumbling against one another and swearing rash oaths (**1-12**).

The last half of the chapter provides a call to prayer and praise. The suffering are to pray, the cheerful are to sing praises, and the sick are to call for the elders of the church. The elders were to pray over the sick and anoint with oil in the name of the Lord. What is uncertain is whether the anointing was sacramental or medicinal (I think the latter, see Review Questions below). In answer to the prayer of faith, the Lord will raise the sick and also forgive sins if they had been committed. In this context James encourages Christians to confess their sins to one another and pray for one another that they may be healed. He reminds them of the value of fervent prayer by the righteous, using Elijah as an example of how God answers prayer providentially. The epistle then closes with a reminder that turning a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins (**13-20**).

OUTLINE

I. TRUE RELIGION DISPLAYS PATIENCE UNDER OPPRESSION (1-12)

A. GOD'S ANGER AT RICH OPPRESSORS (1-6)

1. The rich are called to weep and howl for the miseries to come upon them

- a. Their riches are corrupted
- b. Their garments are moth-eaten
- c. Their gold and silver are corroded
 - 1) Which will be a witness against them
 - 2) Which will eat their flesh like fire
- d. They have heaped up treasure in the last days
- 2. The reasons for God's anger against the rich
 - a. They have defrauded the laborers who mowed their fields
 - 1) Keeping back wages owed them
 - 2) The cries of the reapers have been heard by the Lord of Sabaoth (Hosts)
 - b. They have lived in pleasure and luxury, fattening their hearts in a day of slaughter
 - c. They have condemned and murdered the just who does not resist them

B. A CALL FOR PATIENCE UNDER OPPRESSION (7-12)

- 1. Be patient until the coming of the Lord
 - a. Consider the patience of the farmer
 - b. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand
- 2. Do not grumble against one another
 - a. Lest you be condemned
 - b. The Judge is standing at the door
- 3. Remember the examples of suffering and patience
 - a. Such as the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord and are blessed for their endurance
 - b. Such as the perseverance of Job, to whom the Lord proved very compassionate and merciful at the end
- 4. Above all, do not swear (make rash oaths)
 - a. Either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath
 - b. Let your "Yes" mean "Yes," and your "No" mean "No"
 - c. Lest you fall into judgment

II. TRUE RELIGION BLESSED THROUGH PRAYER, SINGING, AND CONCERN FOR THE ERRING (13-20)

A. THE BLESSING OF PRAYER AND SONG (13-18)

- 1. If anyone is suffering, let him pray
- 2. If anyone is cheerful, let him sing psalms
- 3. If anyone is sick, let him call for the elders of the church
 - a. Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord
 - b. The prayer of faith will save (heal) the sick, and the Lord will raise him up
 - c. If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven

d. Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another

1) That you may be healed

2) For the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much

a) The example of Elijah, a man with a nature like ours

b) He prayed that it would not rain, and no rain fell for three years

c) He prayed again, the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit

B. THE BLESSING OF LOVE FOR ERRING BRETHREN (19-20)

1. He who turns back one who wanders from the truth will save a soul from death

2. He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will cover a multitude of sins