

# James 5 Notes

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## ***Riches, Patience, The Tongue, Prayer And Evangelism (5:1-20)***

- The rich (5:1-6).
  - The rich are told to “weep and howl.” While the first word may describe audible weeping, the second term most certainly does. It is an onomatopoeic word that sounds like howling. In 4:9 James’s readers are commanded to make themselves miserable in all-out repentance. But here in 5:1 the rich are told that God will send the miseries of judgment upon them (cf. Isaiah 13:6; 14:31).
  - The designation is of a class of people. James is not thinking of every rich man, but of a class in their overall characteristics. Not all rich people committed sins attributed to the class here. However, if the rich understood their fate, they would literally shriek over the prospect.
  - The stewardship of possessions is clearly taught in the Bible (Luke 16:12). The wealth of these people, being tied up in garments, property and coins, is deteriorating from disuse and testifies against its owners. In not using it, the owners had lost it, while their workers were deprived of their wages.
  - “Crieth” is a figurative use of the demand that injustice be avenged (cf. Genesis 4:10; 18:20; Luke 19:40). “Lord of Sabaoth” is the “Lord of hosts.” It occurs many times in the Old Testament and the original idea was that of God fighting on the side of Israel to vindicate their cause and give them victory in battle.
  - The wages fraudulently kept back were used to live luxuriously and self-indulgently, thus adding to the severity of their crime. The “just” would be those good men who were mistreated and who did not resist or fight back.
- Patience under suffering (5:7-11).
  - This exhortation is addressed to “brethren,” indicating that James is turning his attention from the unbelieving rich back to the believing Jewish Christians to whom the letter was sent.
  - The “coming of the Lord” is the second coming (Hebrews 9:28). The Greek word *parousia* is a frequent New Testament term for the Lord’s coming. Christians are not to take vengeance for themselves; they are to love their enemies (Romans 12:19). Christians are to bear indignities until that coming.
  - The farmer may suffer several disappointments before the harvest. He must be patient. Evil treatment may provoke, but toughness of mind will enable one to endure the provocation.

- “Grudge not” means literally not to “sigh” or “groan” (2 Corinthians 5:2). Troubles tend to make the impatient complain against even those closest to them. Christians must be patient toward one another as well as toward their persecutors. To groan against brethren is to risk the Lord’s condemnation.
- Job is the outstanding example of steadfastness or patience and was well known for this virtue. The Jews were a suffering people from ancient times, and the example of Job loomed large in their memory and discipline (Ezekiel 14:14, 20). The outcome of double restitution to Job proves the mercy and pity of God. James assures his readers that the Lord is no less so toward them, if they will bear their troubles with patience as Job did.
- The tongue (5:12).
  - James is echoing the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:34-37, which forbid the taking of oaths. Jesus and James are referring to the light, casual use of oaths in informal conversation -- not formal oaths in such places as courts of law. God Himself is said to have taken an oath (Psalm 110:4), and Paul sometimes called God to witness (2 Corinthians 1:21; Galatians 1:20).
  - Rather than employing an oath to convince people that a statement is true, Christians should let their “Yea be yea,” and their “Nay, nay.” That is, they should be honest in all their speech so that when they make an affirmation or denial, people will unquestionably know it is the truth. People are in danger of taking God’s name in vain when they carelessly use oaths, and for this they will come under judgment (cf. Matthew 12:36-37).
  - Under the terms of the law an oath “by heaven,” etc. (as Moses used in Deuteronomy 4:26), or any other oath not using God’s name, would have to be kept or else the swearer brought was brought under the charge of profanity or of forswearing himself. But since these oaths lent themselves to profanity in the way they were used in ordinary conversation, Jesus advised against any use of this type of oath. This is equivalent to teaching that all oaths should be avoided except those in solemn vows and in civil situations where the name of God is not taken in a lesser sense.
- Prayer (5:13-18).
  - Vs. 13 serves as a bridge between the difficulties mentioned earlier (in which the readers are admonished to be patient) and the more specific mention of illness which begins in vs. 14. Prayer is the correct answer or solution to trouble. Prayer is the outpouring of the righteous heart to the Father whom it trusts (Psalm 46:1).
  - Praying in faith and in resignation to God’s will enables us to overcome and stand up under all difficulties and to be better in the end

for the trouble (Hebrews 12:12-13). When trouble falls upon a group or one member of a group, it is proper to pray (Acts 12:12). On the other hand, under ordinary conditions singing is the natural expression of cheerfulness.

- The "prayer of faith" of the elders is miraculous prayer. Faith was a miraculous gift (1 Corinthians 12:9). The anointing with oil was a sign used to show the special blessing of God (cf. 1 Samuel 16:31; Mark 6:13). Jesus said that these kinds of signs were given to show that He was sent from the Father (John 14:12). Since the gifts were distributed by the laying on of the apostles' hands, the elders would be the most likely to be selected to receive them.
- The word for "sick" means "wasted away or ill" and this argues strongly that James has in mind physical or bodily illness and not spiritual illness as some claim. However, sickness will often make men who are sinful more conscious of their spiritual condition. Illness has been the turning point of many lives. James certainly is not taking the position that calamity is the result of sin. Jesus had already refuted this contention (Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-3).
- The confession of faults to one another does not refer to the confession to a person of sins committed against him; though, if one is guilty of such, they ought to be confessed and made right. But James is thinking of unburdening our lives to each other at such time as this, in order that we may intercede for one another.
- We also need to pray for one another regarding sickness. Many passages in both Old and New Testaments express the idea that God listens to the man who walks in His ways (Genesis 18:23-32; Psalm 34:12; Proverbs 15:29; John 9:31). The petition of a righteous man avails when it is doing its work, which is petitioning, pleading and begging.
- Elijah had no superhuman powers; he was by nature a human being and nothing more. However, when he prayed that it would not rain, it did not rain for three and a half years.
- The conversion of the erring (5:19-20).
  - In these final verses, James clearly has in mind the sinning Christian, as in 5:15-16. To "err from the truth" means to be deceived and thus led away from the truth or the gospel.
  - One converts a sinner by bringing them to their senses through the word of God by teaching, warning, pleading, admonishing and showing an interest in him. Unfortunately, some put themselves beyond repentance (Hebrews 6:4-6).
  - It is difficult for us to realize the value of a soul because this is beyond our understanding. The best way to realize the value of a soul is to remember what it cost to redeem one -- the blood of Jesus.

- To “hide sins” in the Old Testament meant to have them forgiven (Psalm 85:2; Proverbs 10:12; Nehemiah 4:5). Converting a sinner means that his sins are forgiven, and this is a noble labor for a Christian.