



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Catholic Epistle of St. James

Chapter 5

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The chapter starts with a strong condemnation toward the rich who were oppressing the poor
- Most likely these were rich unbelievers
- St. James counsels his brethren to patiently wait for the coming of the Lord
- Holding on to patience, he also warns against grumbling against one another (1-12)
- Then he makes a call to prayer and praise, and the sick are to call for the priests of the church



Introduction

- The priests were to pray over the sick and anoint with oil (unction of the sick)
- In answer to the prayer of faith, the Lord will raise the sick and also forgive sins (confession)
- He reminds them of the value of fervent prayer by the righteous, using Elijah as an example
- The epistle then closes with a reminder that turning a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death (13-20)

Rich Oppressors Will Be Judged (5:1-6)



- The expression “come now” is used in Jas 4:13
- There it is a rebuke to those who haste to be rich; here to those who use riches wickedly
- St. James looks beyond the church of his day to his nation and to the church of after time
- Weep and howl because of coming judgments for your sins
- Even their riches in which they trusted are corrupted, or spoiled

Rich Oppressors Will Be Judged (5:1-6)



- Much of the wealth of that period was in stores of various kinds which improper care would destroy
- The rich gathered great stores of garments; these would be liable to be eaten by moths if not used
- Rusted from disuse
- These metals do not literally rust, but do discolor from long disuse
- The idea is that they show they have been stored, not used
- They shall punish you, as though heated by fire

Rich Oppressors Will Be Judged (5:1-6)



- This stored wealth will curse the possessor
- Instead of laying up treasure in heaven you have continued to pile up earthly treasure to the last days, a matter of extreme folly
- May be the last days were the end of his nation, country and Jerusalem, was close at hand
- These rich men are reprimanded for two sins; the improper use of wealth, and the sinful acquisition of wealth

Rich Oppressors Will Be Judged (5:1-6)



- To keep back the hire of the laborer is denounced Lev 19:13, Deut 24:14, Jer 22:13, Mal 3:5, Job 24:6
- The cries of the defrauded laborers are entered into the ears of the Lord who will avenge them
- Ye have spent your wealth on your own pleasures
- It is an allusion to the beasts which are fatted and feasted for slaughter and food
- They were feasting and engaging in pleasure when the awful destruction was near

Rich Oppressors Will Be Judged (5:1-6)



- The murder of the Just One, Jesus, was the sin of Israel which brought upon them destruction
- It was the rich and influential, not the poor, who sought his death
- He does not resist you (Isa 53:7)
- “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth”

Be Patient and Persevering (5:7-12)



- St. James now turns from the rich, wicked Jews, to his suffering brethren. Let them be patient
- The coming of the Lord would bring relief from Jewish persecution
- The tiller of the soil has to sow and wait long in patience for fruit. Be you like him
- The early rain was the showers which prepared the ground for the seed; the latter rain, the showers needed to bring the harvest to maturity. Deut 11:14

Be Patient and Persevering (5:7-12)



- Wait, like the farmers for your harvest of joy
- The relief which the Lord will bring is near
- Do not bear grudges against one another
- The Lord will condemn this, and the coming of the Lord draws near (Jas 5:8)
- The prophets suffered, were patient, endured to the end and secured the blessing
- We believe that they will have a final reward

Be Patient and Persevering (5:7-12)



- The enduring patience of Job, who refused to distrust God, is meant
- The end of Job case was wrought by the Lord, and how his endurance was blessed Job 42:10
- The blessing that came on him is a demonstration that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful
- This verse is from the words of Christ (Mt 5:33-37), swearing is a common sin unto this day
- Whatever you say, take care to make it good

Meeting Specific Needs (5:13–18)



- Is any among you afflicted? Let him not engage in any improper use of the tongue, but let him pray
- God is the Helper in such an hour
- Is any cheerful? Let his joy be shown, not in reckless speech, but in singing praises
- Prayer and thanksgiving are the appropriate expressions for each condition
- This is a reference to the sacrament of the Unction of the Sick

Meeting Specific Needs (5:13–18)



- Elders: the priests
- The sick are anointed with oil, a channel of the Spirit, who effects the healing, hands are laid, and prayer are offered (6:13, Isa 1:6, Lk 10:34)
- The prayer for the sick must be offered in faith to be effectual
- Often our sickness is due to sins against our body
- The Lord, who raises the sick in answer to prayer, will forgive these

Meeting Specific Needs (5:13–18)



- This verse is reference for confession
- We all need healing of our sins
- Let the brother confess his faults as proof of repentance and let the priests pray for him
- Repentance, confession and prayer are the conditions of the forgiveness of sins
- The prayer should be offered from a righteous person in a zealous way

Meeting Specific Needs (5:13–18)



- Elijah was a man like ourselves, yet great results followed his prayer (1 Kgs 17:1)
- No mention is made in the Old Testament of the prayer, but it is announced prophetically
- In the OT the time is not exactly stated (Lk 4:25)
- In the third year the Lord spoke to Elijah about rain, 1 Kgs 18:1
- The prayer in v. 18 was on Mt. Carmel 1 Kgs 18:42 after the overthrow of the priests of Baal

Bring Back the Erring One (5:19-20)



- If a brother is led away from the gospel into false doctrine, or into false practice and one bring him back from his errors and restore him
- As encouragement to engage in this work of love let him know how great a work has been done
- Save a soul from death: Not physical but eternal death
- The sins of those forgiven are said to be covered or hidden by the Blood of the Lord (Ps 32:1)



Conclusion

- Who is being condemned in verses 1-6 ?
- What sort of miseries were to come upon them?
- Why is God so angry at these rich?
- What are the Christians to do in response to such oppression?
- What three examples does James provide to encourage patience?
- What does James encourage one to do when suffering? When cheerful?



Conclusion

- What is one who is sick to do?
- What will save or heal the sick?
- What are the priests to do? What will save (or heal) the sick? Who will raise him up?
- What if the one who is sick has committed sins? What about other Christians?
- What avails much? Who is a good illustration?
- What happens when one turns a sinner from the error of his way?