

MAJOR THEMES IN THE CHAPTER:

- a. Warnings to Rich People who Abuse Poor People
- b. Patience and Trust in the Goodness of God
- c. The Power of Prayer.

HOW THIS CHAPTER FITS INTO THE LARGER MESSAGE OF THE BOOK:

In chapter 1, James spoke of the fleeting nature of riches and the need for humility amongst the wealthy. In chapter 5, James returns to the topic of money and gives some stern warning to those who abuse others to accumulate riches. He also returns to the topic of endurance in times of trial (see James 1:2-4). James concludes his book assuring the Christians that God is working for their good, even during the seasons that seem most difficult.

APPLICATIONS:

Don't ever do something evil because you think you can get away with it (like the rich who abused the poor). You may be able to evade getting caught or avoid facing consequences in human courts, but nothing is missed by God. Nothing is hidden from a God who never sleeps, and when we stand in front of Him on Judgement Day, He will uncover the evils we tried so hard to conceal. It is better to confess your sins and find forgiveness in Jesus, than to be a fool and think yourself clever enough to hide things from the Almighty.

Throughout his letter, James talks about prayer as if it is something powerful. Unfortunately, we don't always treat it that way. If you are like me, you are tempted to think your actions, skills, and talents are the power behind things being accomplished. But the Bible consistently opposes that view. Over and over again, the Scriptures teach us that God's will is accomplished through God's power. If we neglect prayer, we are indirectly stating that we don't believe God's role in our work is significant. Rather than relying on our own power and accomplishing little, let's recognize our weakness and call for God's help at every opportunity.

"confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."

- James 5:16 -

James⁵

CHAPTER OUTLINE:

+ WARNINGS TO RICH PEOPLE (5:1-6):

- The last chapter begins with James condemning those who had accumulated riches through fraud and abuse.
- He told them their riches would testify against them when God judges the earth.
- "Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you..."
- Some of the rich people had defrauded their laborers, and they were able to get away with it because of their money and connections (same thing happens today).
- But James wanted the rich to know that God had heard the "cries" of the people they defrauded and they would not escape His judgement.
- These criminal rich people were compared to a "fattened" animal.
- This would have been an animal that was kept in a stall and fattened up for eventual slaughter at a feast or festival.
- The animal was given an easy life and all the food it wanted, but it was destined for destruction.
- In a similar way, these rich people lived in luxury on the earth, but destruction would be their end.

+ ENDURANCE THROUGH DIFFICULTY (5:7-11):

- In the next couple verses, James encouraged the brethren to be patient for the appearance of Jesus.
- He employed the illustration of a farmer who patiently waits for the harvest.
- While waiting, they were not to grumble about each other (similar to 4:11-12).
- The disciples were to look back at the faithfulness of God's prophets for inspiration.
- Christians admire the faithfulness of the prophets and should seek to imitate their resilience.
- James also mentions Job, an Old Testament figure who put his trust in God even through extreme difficulty.
- Although the Devil, ungodly people, rich people, and sometimes other disciples were going to make it hard for the believers, they could always rely on God to be "compassionate and merciful."

+ CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND INSTRUCTIONS (5:12-20):

- James concludes his letter with a few final instructions about a variety of topics.
- First, he told the Christians not to swear oaths.
- Echoing Jesus, he wrote, "let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no..."
- Next, he emphasized the value and power of prayer.
- If anyone was sick, they were to call the elders to anoint them with oil and pray for them.
- Disciples were told "confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."
- The prayer of a righteous person has "great power."
- As an example of prayer's power, James reminded his readers about Elijah the prophet.
- Elijah's prayers stopped rain from falling on Israel for six months.
- Lastly, James wrote about the beauty of repentance and the importance of helping those who walk away from Jesus.
- "Whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."