

“Be Patient”

James 5:1-8

Chapter divisions in the Bible were not present in the original writings. The earliest manuscripts of the Greek New Testament were written in upper case letters with no punctuation marks. James is not starting a new thought in chapter five but continues the theme of those who did not consult God in their decision making processes, as recorded at the end of chapter four. Although James is addressing brothers (believers, James 1:2) he would be aware that unbelievers, either inside or outside the church (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43), would be readers of his epistle.

The rich men are those who have trusted in their riches and not in God (Matt. 13:22; 1Tim. 6:17). They will weep and howl (Matt. 13:42) because their riches are **temporal**. Instead of storing up treasures in heaven, they have put their faith in earthly treasures (Matt. 6:19-20). Riches by themselves are amoral; they can be used for good or evil (1Tim. 6:17-19). The **love** of money is the source of all kinds of evil (Matt. 6:21; 1Tim. 6:10).

Further evidence of their corrupt hearts is their treatment of their servants or employees. They have kept back their wages, which was forbidden under the Law (Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14-15). The cry of those so mistreated will reach the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (literally hosts or armies, Isa. 1:9; Rom. 9:29)!

Jesus spoke often of riches and their use. The parable of the “Rich Fool” illustrates the folly of those who lay up treasures for **themselves** and are not rich toward **God** (Luke 12:15-21). The parable of the “Unjust Steward” teaches that **all** will be held accountable for that which God has entrusted to one’s care (Luke 16:1-13). The parable of the “Rich man and Lazarus” gives clear evidence that the use of one’s earthly resources reflects the heart’s condition, upon which we will be **judged** (Luke 16:19-31).

The rich oppressing the poor was common in the ancient world. It was another form of persecution that James’ readers would be familiar, as the early church was predominately poor. They must be patient! It is a command we all must obey. It means to be long suffering and forbearing (1Cor. 13:4; Heb. 6:15). God **is** long suffering towards us, not willing that **any** should perish (2Pet. 3:9). Focus on Christ (Col. 3:2) and His soon return as He will make all things right (Rom. 8:18; Heb. 10:25; 1Pet. 4:7; 1John 2:18)!