When you eat the bread, you are saying you are willing to be broken. When you drink the wine, you are saying you are willing to take on the sufferings of Christ.
John Wright

Prayer Study 489
JAMES CHAPTER FIVE
First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

James 5 Amplified Bible (AMP)

Misuse of Riches

5 *Come [quickly] now, you rich [who lack true faith and hoard and misuse your resources], weep and howl over the miseries [the woes, the judgments] that are coming upon you.* ***2*** *Your wealth has rotted and is ruined and your [fine] clothes have become moth-eaten.* ***3*** *Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. You have stored up your treasure in the last days [when it will do you no good].* ***4*** *Look! The wages that you have [fraudulently] withheld from the laborers who have mowed your fields are crying out [against you for vengeance]; and the cries of the harvesters have come to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.* ***5*** *On the earth you have lived luxuriously and abandoned yourselves to soft living and led a life of wanton pleasure [self-indulgence, self-gratification]; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.* ***6*** *You have condemned and have put to death*

the righteous man; he offers you no resistance.

In the first six verses of this chapter James' goal is two fold: 1. To show the worthlessness of earthly possessions and riches in the light of eternity; 2. To show the detestable character of people whose lives are wrapped-up in obtaining possessions and riches. James tells this latter group of people that they would "weep and howl" if they could know the judgment that is coming upon them at the Day of the Lord. They will have frantic terror, as they realize that they have put possessions over relationship with Jesus.

We have looked at the meaning behind Day of the Lord many times, but I want to repeat the information once more in case anyone missed it:

> **The Day of the Lord**
> *Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come* (Joel 1:15).
>
> *But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write un to you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the LORD so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with a child, and they shall not escape. But ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief* (1st Thessalonians 5:2-4).

The Day of the Lord, therefore, is a period of time (not just one day) in history at the end of the age in the last days when the Lord openly intervenes in the affairs of men. It is an apocalyptic term and also a prophetic term and is thought to be the Lord's outpouring of His wrath (see Psalm 2) and will be characterized by catastrophic weather and earthly calamities such as plagues, famines, pestilence, and drought. (see Isaiah 2:12, Isaiah 13:6-9, Amos 5:18-20, Jeremiah 46:10, 1st Corinthians 5:5, 1st Thessalonians 5:2, 2nd Peter 3:8-10). According to Jay Atkinson of The Latter Rain Ministries, "It is that time between the age of evil, in which we presently live and which will be destroyed, and the golden age of peace and justice, the future Millennial Kingdom to come on the earth. It is the fall of the old order and the ushering in of the new." Joel tells us that this will come as a destruction from the Almighty, a day of wrath and fierce anger, trouble and distress, a day of gloom and thick darkness for the proud, the rich, and the lofty. Joel also asked the question in Joel 2:11, "Who can endure it?" And indeed without the fullness of the Holy Spirit we will not be able to endure it and will not stand. The Day of the Lord will culminate in the final shaking and sifting of the Church, the fall of the Babylonian World System, the fullness of the Latter Rain, and the coming forth of the Bride who has made herself ready. The Bride will come out of the closet and meet the Bridegroom.

The Day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. The scriptures emphasize that many in the Church will be asleep and unprepared. The Word says that they that sleep, sleep in the night. This is when the thief comes. We must wake-up from our spiritual slumber and be ready. Many think that we have already entered the beginnings of this day.

In the Middle East of that time there were three sources of wealth:

1. Corn and grain, which eventually become rotten;

2. Garments of clothing-We see this value concerning garments throughout the Bible. Examples include the change of garments Joseph gave to his brothers (Genesis 45:22); the beautiful mantle that Achan took, bringing disaster against the nation and death to himself and his family (Joshua 7:21; the garment Samson promised to anyone who would solve his riddle (Judges 14:12; and the garment Naaman brought for Elisha and which Elisha's servant Gehazi wrongly took (1st Kings 5:5 and 5:22). Paul's statement that he took no money or clothing (Acts 20:33) is therefore very significant. Matthew records that Jesus said that these garments would eventually be eaten by moths and thus worthless (Matthew 6:19).
3. Finally, the Middle Easterners prized silver and gold. James uses the word *katiasthai,* which means "to rust all the way through," to describe what will happen to these earthly riches. Since gold and silver do not actually rust, James is just telling us that even the greatest of riches have no permanency and ultimately will be valueless.

No book in the bible condemns wealth as much as the book of James. James is primarily addressing wealth that has been selfishly obtained. While the Bible does not condemn being rich, it does insist that the wealthy use their riches to bless others.

According to Barclay, the day laborer in Palestine lived at the point of starvation. It was impossible for him to save anything. Thus, if the landowner withheld his wages, the poor man and his family could not eat. To safeguard against this, the Bible repeatedly emphasizes that the workman is worthy of his wages (Luke 10:7, 1st Timothy 5:18, Leviticus 19:13, Deuteronomy 14:14-15, Jeremiah 22:13, Malachi 3:5).

On the opposite end of the spectrum from the laborers, the rich lived for lust and pleasure. They became so focused on getting and staying rich, that they forgot their main duty to help others less fortunate. In the end the unrighteous and selfish rich will be destroyed.

The righteous man James refers to in this passage is obviously Jesus. He went to the cross without resisting. Isaiah 53:7 says, “He was oppressed, and He was afflicted. Yet He opened not His mouth.”

Patience

7 *So wait patiently, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits [expectantly] for the precious harvest from the land, being patient about it, until it receives the early and late rains.* ***8*** *You too, be patient; strengthen your hearts [keep them energized and firmly committed to God], because the coming of the Lord is near.* ***9*** *Do not complain against one another, believers, so that you will not be judged [for it]. Look! The Judge is standing right at the door.*

The early Church believed Jesus was coming back any day. Although he too believed in the imminent return of Christ, here James encourages the people to wait patiently for His Second Coming.

Rain is very significant in Scripture. I know we have often talked of the *Former rain* and the *Latter Rain,* but I want to repeat this information here because it is important for an understanding of this passage:

The Former and Latter Rain

Rain in the Bible represents revival, refreshing, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the Word. Seasonal rainfall, the former rain (rain at planting time which softens

up the soil for the plowman) and the latter rain (rain at spring time, which is the time to harvest the crops), are important prophetic symbols of the Last Days.

The Jews believe that rain is a source of blessing that comes from God Himself, from the heavens. The Baal worshipers associated Baal with springs, wells, and stream, but only Yahweh could give and was the rainmaker (Jeremiah 14:22). This was proven to the Jewish people by Elijah in 1st Kings 18:17-40 in his showdown with the Baal priests. Rain is the first blessing promised to Jacob's land (Genesis 27:28) and to Israel (Deuteronomy 28:12). The decent of rain is likened to the blessings of the kingdom (Psalm 72:6-7). In contrast, the presence of clouds and wind without rain is likened to a man who "boasts of a gift he does not give" (Proverbs 25:14), which is fake and phony "appearance" religion.

The former rain usually begins in mid or late October but may be delayed until January. Again these rains are the seed planting time and cause a fall in temperature and produce a brilliance in the sky. In Israel, plowing is done after the early rains have softened the earth. The plowman represents the evangelist. The farmer must wait for the rains before he can plow the ground. Job said, "They waited for me as for the rain" (Job 29:33). Jeremiah described the lack of rain: "There was no rain in the earth, the ploughmen were ashamed; they covered their heads" (Jeremiah 14:4). Once the rain has come, the industrious farmer will start his plowing. "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold' (Proverbs 20:4). (How many refuse to evangelize because of some inconvenience, such as the cold, and because of being out of their comfort zone?) Such a man will retreat into his house and enjoy the warmth of the fire, but he will miss the harvest.

The latter or spring rain or harvest rain begins between April and early May. Latter rain showers are the last showers

of the rainy season. The wheat harvest takes place in May so these rains are associated with harvest. By the middle of August the fruit is gathered, and from that time until the former rains, the weather is scorching hot and dry, much like a Georgia Indian summer. Nothing can more expressively represent spiritual blessings than copious showers after this trying time of heat and drought.

Barclay tells us that the New Testament uses three different words to describe the Second Coming of Jesus:

1. *PAROUSIA* (Matthew 24:3, 24:27, 24:37, 39:1; 1st Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23; 2nd Thessalonians 2:1; 1st Corinthians 15:23; 1st John 2:28; 2nd Pter 1:16, 3:4). This word is used in Greek for someone's arrival. But it also has two other uses in Greek. *Parousia* is used of an invasion of a country by an army and also used of the visit of a king to a province of his empire. Thus, Jesus' *parousia* will be when Heaven invades earth and when the King comes as Lord to worshiping subjects.
2. *EPIPHANEICA* (1st Titus 2:13; 2nd Timothy 4:1; 2nd Thessalonians 2:9) is also used to describe the Second Coming of Jesus. The Greeks used this word to denote the appearance of a god to the worshipper or to denote the rise of an emperor to the imperial power of Rome. Thus, Jesus is coming as God, both to those who worship Him and to those who do not but who will bow and confess He is Lord at His Second Coming.
3. *APOKALUPSIS* (1st Peter 1:7, 1:13) means *unveiling* or *laying bare.* Thus, Jesus' Second Coming will unveil the power and glory of God to man, woman and child. Again, EVERY knee will bow and EVERY tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippines 2:10-11)!

The New Testament tells us that *no one*, and *no one* means *no one* on earth without question, know the day or hour when Jesus will come. Even Jesus does not know. Only the Father knows (Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32). Thus, we should run from anyone

who sets a date for His coming. Barclay makes this statement: "Human speculation about the time of the second coming is not only useless, it is blasphemous-for surely no one should seek to gain a knowledge which is hidden from Jesus Christ Himself and exists only in the mind of God."

Barclay also gives us scriptural ways to get ready for His Coming:

1. Constantly be on the watch (1st Peter 4:7, Matthew 24:42).
2. Don't let His delay in coming cause despair or forgetfulness in you (2nd Peter 3:4).
3. Prepare by being sober (1st Peter 4:7), walking in holiness (1st Thessalonians 3:13), blameless in body and in spirit (1st Thessalonians 5:23), free from works of darkness and clad in the armor of light (Romans 13:11-14).
4. Walk in fellowship with other believers (1st Peter 4:8-9), 1st Corinthians 16:14 & 16:22, Philippians 4:5, Hebrews 10: 24-25).
5. Abide in the Vine (1st John 2:28).

Examples to Follow

10 *As an example, brothers and sisters, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord [as His messengers and representatives].* ***11*** *You know we call those blessed [happy, spiritually prosperous, favored by God] who were steadfast and endured [difficult circumstances]. You have heard of the patient endurance of Job and you have seen the Lord's outcome [how He richly blessed Job]. The Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.*

James reminds us here of the patient endurance of the prophets of God in times

past. Job also refused to curse God and die but patiently endured all his troubles and heartache. He did have questions but never lost faith in God (Job 16:19, 19:25). In the end "*The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning*" (Job 42:12).

No Need for Oaths

12 *But above all, my fellow believers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be [a truthful] yes, and your no be [a truthful] no, so that you may not fall under judgment.*

In these times the Jews had an unusual practice of distinction between oaths. If you made an oath but did not mention God's name in it, it was not considered binding. If you invoked God's name, however, it was believed that God was a partner in this oath, and the oath could not be broken. Dishonest people would do all they could to make others swear to an oath without God's name in it so that they could violate the conditions of the oath to their advantage. This made the whole practice of making oaths a mockery.

James is saying here that one should be so honest that oaths were unnecessary. The Jewish sect, the Essenes outlawed the swearing of oaths altogether. They believed that, if an

oath was necessary to be sure the person was telling the truth, that person was already branded as untrustworthy. The New Testament position is that every word spoken is spoken in the presence of God and ought to be true, making oaths unnecessary.

A Glimpse into the 1st Century Church

13 *Is anyone among you suffering? He must pray. Is anyone joyful? He is to sing praises [to God].* ***14*** *Is anyone among you sick? He must call for the elders (spiritual leaders) of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;* ***15*** *and the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*

These verses give us a glimpse of the 1st Century Church in operation. The Church was a joyful, singing Church (1st Corinthians 14:15 & 14:26, Romans 15:9). The Church was also a place of healing. This was a characteristic inherited from the Jews. When a Jewish person got sick, he went to the Rabbi instead of to the doctor. The Rabbi anointed him with oil and prayed over him.

Healing was so important to the 1st Century Church that those who had the gift of healing were ordained and placed in leadership position, once it was determined that they

really did have the gift of healing and that that gift came from God. Healing has always been a part of the Christian Church since the very beginning.

Confess Your Sins One to Another

16 *Therefore, confess your sins to one another [your false steps, your offenses], and pray for one another, that you may be healed and restored. The heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous man (believer) can accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God—it is dynamic and can have tremendous power].* ***17*** *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours [with the same physical, mental, and spiritual limitations and shortcomings], and he prayed intensely for it not to rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.* ***18*** *Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its crops [as usual].*

The Jews believed that all sickness was the result of sin. The Rabbis believed that no one could be healed without the forgiveness of sin. We know from the miracle of the healing of the man born blind in John 9 that not all sickness is sin. The question of the Pharisees was, “Was the result of the blindness because of the man’s sin or his parents’ sin?” To this, Jesus says the cause was the sin of neither.

The Moravians and the early Methodist met two or three times a week to confess their sins and pray for one another. The Jews believed that to cure sicknesses one musty be right with God and with one another.

The Jews had a saying that the one who prays surrounds his house with a wall stronger than iron. They believed that prayer put them in touch with the power of God. They saw prayer as *standing* before God and agonizing prayer as *bowing down* with the face between the knees.

James' Conclusion

19 *My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you strays from the truth and falls into error and [another] one turns him back [to God],* ***20*** *let the [latter] one know that the one who has turned a sinner from the error of his way will save that one's soul from death and cover a multitude of sins [that is, obtain the pardon of the many sins committed by the one who has been restored].*

The book of James ends with a powerful point: A fellow Christian who turns a wayward sinner back to the right path not only has the joy in restoring a brother or sister but also has covered a multitude of his or her own sin. Origen, the third-century Biblical scholar says there are six ways to gain forgiveness of sin:

1. By Baptism (1st Peter 3:21, Acts 22:16, Titus 3:5)
2. By Martyrdom (Revelation 6:9-11)
3. By Almsgiving (Luke 11:41)

4. By the Forgiveness of Others (Matthew 6:14)
5. By Love (Luke 7:47)
6. By Converting a Sinner from Evil Ways (James 5:19-20)

None of these are independent of having a relationship with Jesus. We must be washed in the blood to truly be forgiven. *But, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin* (1st John 1:7).

Restoration is a wonderful way to conclude this very practical book on living the life for Christ.

WILL YOU BE POURED OUT?

Will you be poured out like wine
Upon the altar for me?
Will you be broken like bread
To feed the hungry for me?
Will you be so one with me
That I may do just as I please?
Be My life, My light, My love,
My Word Fulfilled.