

James 5—Patience and Prayer

By Charles Feinberg

Announcer 1:

The Bible Institute of Los Angeles Inc., half century old Christian training center of the West presents, Verse by Verse with Dr. Louis T. Talbot, Biola Chancellor and one of America's great evangelical leaders. And now, once again, your radio Bible teacher Dr. Louis T. Talbot.

Announcer 2:

This week, in the absence of Dr. Louis T. Talbot, Biola Chancellor, we take pleasure in presenting: Dr. Charles L. Feinberg, director of Talbot Theological Seminary and Professor of Old Testament. Dr. Feinberg is a distinguished author, Bible conference speaker, and radio minister. And now, Dr. Feinberg.

Charles Feinberg:

We're happy to greet you around the word of God today friends on Dr. Talbot's Verse by Verse, exposition of the word of God. We have been in the last broadcast, the last four broadcasts, dealing with the individual chapters in the Epistle of James. And today we come to the last chapter of the Epistle. Chapter 5, on Patience and prayer, what a wonderful way to end a, an epistle, a book on Christian ethic, Christian conduct, Christian practical life. Get your Bibles then, friends. And if you have friends that should be listening into the broadcasts, you have time yet to call them. We'd be so happy for you to do that and we can read the word and study the

word together on the broadcast today. The fifth chapter then of James, on Patience and prayer, shall we look to God in prayer? Our Father in heaven, as we come to this concluding chapter of this so eminently practical epistle, may we determine under thy good hand that what we hear, we shall do for thou hast told us in this epistle so clearly, and so distinctly, that we are to be not only hearers of the word, but doers also. For if we just hear and do not practice we deceive ourselves. May thy spirit enlighten us, encourage us. May he thrill our hearts, and may we go forth to do thy will in the power and demonstration of the Spirit of God, we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

The fifth chapter of James, you remember in the fourth chapter, we had been dealing with worldly mindedness and now the theme here is another application of the attitude of worldly mindedness the truths of the last chapter are timely. They're intensely practical for the days in which we live. In the first part, the first six verses, there's a condemnation of the rich. "Come now you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you, your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth eaten, and your gold and your silver rusted and the rust shall be for a testimony against you and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days. Behold the higher the laborers who mowed your fields which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbiath. Ye have lived delicately on the earth and taking your pleasure. Ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one. He doth not resist you".

In verses 1-11 we have a prophecy of the godless rich. In the last days of the church age. Unbelievers are probably in view in the first six verses. God notices every earthly inequality and oppression and we have the word here that the rich are to weep and howl for the miseries that are to come upon them these miseries are unexpected and sudden at the coming of the Lord. Verse

seven tells believers, "Be patient, therefore brethren until the coming of the Lord, behold the husbandmen waited for the precious fruit of the earth. Being patient over until it received the early and latter rain". So these miseries will come but unexpectedly. They will come suddenly violently at the coming of the Lord upon those who are rich but are the godless rich and the last days of the church age. And the riches are corrupted, the garments are moth eaten, the scripture indicates they are heaping up things which will just serve to be a source of condemnation to them. Now the last days spoken of here are the last days of the church age. That's true today and verse four speaks of the sin of fraud. Deuteronomy had told Israel that they were not to keep back the higher of the laborers who mowed the field, not to keep that back by fraud. And those who have reaped should get their rightful pay. Oh how much of fraud goes on in the world. The poor being defrauded by the rich. That is no practical way for a believer to show the reality of his faith in Christ, this should not be true of him. Now the Lord is spoken of as the Lord of Sabbiath it's the only place in the New Testament that we find it here, in James the fifth chapter. The lord of Sabbiath speaks of God as the Lord of all the hosts of heaven and earth and he it is who is the protector and the Avenger of the poor. In verse five, we have the statement that ye have lived delicately on the earth and taking your pleasure you have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. Think of the sin of unfeeling pleasure. Others are in need. Others are in lack and going without the necessity. And yet in a day of slaughter they are unconscious that the day is so near when their deeds will be visited upon them. And then verse six says you've condemned, you've killed the righteous one, he doth not resist you. That's the sin of violence. Who is the righteous? Not speaking of Christ but the oppressed believer and he doesn't resist you, the just are patient. They are taken advantage of and probably the unbelieving just laugh and say well they are easy marks.

They claim that they are not to resist. And here we can take advantage of them and to our heart's content, we can tread them down. We can oppress them we can harass them we can defraud them. But God takes note of all this. You've condemned, you've killed the righteous one you unsaved, you have done this to the saved and he has not resisted you. Don't think that God has not taken note of it.

There was a British financier, a reputed millionaire who owned a yacht and a racing stock. He entertained royalty and made as much as three million dollars in one day but he died by his own hand. Practically a roadmap before he brought his life to a close he wrote a letter which was published in the British press. He laid bare the truth without any false coloring of what this world really is he had tasted all this life could give.

And now this is the record his verdict in the truest sermon he could ever preach. He said on the last day of my life before my eyes, my brain unwinds the film of the past. In quick succession, episode after episode unwinds and I can now judge that life today is nothing but a cauldron of greed, lust, and power. Gone are the nice feelings and contentment and in their places are roaring, hectic existence. He draws aside the curtain, he shows us the world in its true character. He says I've known what it is to have all you desire and to have thousands waiting to eat out of your hand, how valueless was his wealth. We have in the first six verses then, a condemnation of the rich. Now riches are not evil in themselves. It's the matter in which they are used that Scripture has so much to condemn. A condemnation of the godless rich. And in the next six verses we have patience in waiting for the Lord. Be patient therefore brethren until the coming of the Lord, behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the Earth being patient over it until it received the early and latter rain. Believers now are addressed. How do you know? Well

he says be patient therefore, brethren. Faith is what gives us the needed patience in suffering. No one can maintain the Christian fortitude that God expects unless he is undergirded by faith.

Now we know there are some who erroneously take the early rain to mean Pentecost and the latter rain to mean another such similar visitation by God. That's entirely incorrect. The early and latter rain are taken from the natural phenomena of the land of Palestine. There's nothing in that passage that shows that one of the rains is past and the other rain is future. They could both be past, they could both be future. So you see the interpretation is an erroneous one that says one rain, the early rain, is Pentecost and the latter rain is a future, even a present day manifestation of the Spirit of God, comparable to Pentecost. Deuteronomy 11:14, we have the reference to the fact of Palestinian climate. The early rain is at the sowing time, about November or December, to get the crop into the ground growing properly. And the latter rain is to mature the harvest, about March or April, to make a fine, bountiful harvest and crop. We need both of those and a real heart, husbandman, a farmer, a farmer who's experienced, knows these things and he knows he can't have a harvest with just one of the rains, he has to have both of them and it's not just enough to say well I've had the early rain and that's all I need to be concerned about and let it all go by the board. No, he must wait patiently and it's often patient waiting in the Near East for that second rain, the latter rain. And verse nine, verse eight be also patient, establish your hearts for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Just as the farmer has to exercise patience, so must we as believers have our hearts established in God, in faith because the coming of the Lord is at hand. And verse 9, Mirman our brother one against another. That you be not judged. Behold the judge standeth before the doors, were not to murmur against those more favored in outward circumstances. They are to practice forbearance one toward another. And then we have the example of other sufferers, which can be encouraging. Take, brethren, for an example of

suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. Behold we call them blessed that endured. You have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord.

The purpose, the goal that God was moving on toward, how the Lord is full of pity and merciful.

The example of other sufferers is encouraging first example of patience was the farmer who must wait for his rains to get the right kind of a harvest and then he goes on to speak of the prophets who suffered and were patient. They were reviled. They were doing the will of God, they were speaking the word of God. Yet they suffered, but nevertheless they were patient. The end of the Lord, the outcome that the Lord brought about in their lives, as with Job was blessing and only blessing. So there must be patience exercised. I know that's not easy to accomplish, it's not easy in any of us. But it's not a natural grace, it's a grace that comes from God. But above all things, my brethren, verse 12, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other on earth, but let your yea be yea and nay, nay that ye fall not under judgment.

Swear not. Now that's not in keeping with the believer's endurance or patience. Oaths often reveal forgetfulness of God, of the Lord's will. A man's word should be his bond. That should be sufficient. There's no reference here to authorize judicial affirmations. Paul used oaths in appropriate places; 2 Corinthians 1:23, Romans 1:9, and Galatians 1:20, and Philippians 1:8.

It's said that the immortal astronomer, Kepler, whose genius discovered the laws that govern the movement of the planets, saw his great labors despised by his contemporaries. Reduced to extreme misery, he was on his deathbed when a friend asked him if he didn't suffer intensely in dying without seeing his discoveries appreciated. "My friend", said Kepler, "God waited five thousand years for one of his creatures to discover the admirable laws which he has given to the stars. And cannot I wait also until justice is done me?"

It was a worthy attitude. It was the right attitude. It's the proper attitude of a believer. The attitude that should characterize you and me. What is it? Patience in waiting for the Lord. The first six verses then of chapter 5 are condemnation of the rich, the next six verses, patience in waiting for the Lord. Now in the remainder of the chapter, we have the prayer of faith. There has been much said much written about this, many true things and, I'm sorry to say, many things that are not scriptural. Let's see the passage. Let's see what the Spirit of God can teach us in this portion. Verse 13, "is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise". In verses 13-18, faith is seen in prevailing prayer. We have prayer in relation to the trials of the believer. If a man suffering, many think that first of all he should seek some kind of healing and he should, of course. But first of all he must look to God in prayer. God is to be brought into the reckoning first, last, and always. And so is any among you suffering? Let him pray. If anyone is cheerful, let him sing praise. Let God be taken into the account. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church. Let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord and the prayer of faith shall save him that sick. The Lord shall raise him up and if you've committed sins, it shall be forgiven him. Confess, therefore, your sins one to another. Pray one for another that you may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. Now verses 14-16 have been taken by many as a proof text of faith healers. It's also been taken for a practice of anointing and the like. But there was a Jewish practice in case of healing the sick, and that was the anointing Mark 6:13. And many rightly take the oil as representative of all proper means used in illness. Look at Luke 10:34, the anointing was a symbolic act. It was an outward sign, just as the clay was that Christ put on the blind man's eyes. Now Lord Jesus Christ could have healed without any clay, of course he could. He did. He even healed without being in the presence of the one who was afflicted. But here it pleased him

to give an outward sign, symbolical act was this anointing of James 5. In Job 33:19 we find the sickness can be a chastening and evidently this is the thing that is before us with regard to the word of James. In verse 15, it's the prayer. Notice it's the prayer, not the oil which heals.

Reference seems to be to sickness because of some definite sin.

Now this word, of course, isn't applicable to all cases because the result here is certain: he shall, the Lord shall raise him up, that prayer of faith shall save him, the sick. It doesn't say it may.

Now some folks try to wiggle out of that. This word isn't applicable to all cases because the result here is certain, shall say. Whereas we know all prayer for the sick doesn't issue in this manner. Upon what basis, then, is the prayer of faith valid? Not when illness is from bodily weakness primarily, that's the case of Timothy, who used means. Nor from over exertion in Christian service, we have the case of Epaphroditas, who because of the ministry was neigh unto death, neither one of those cases. But here it seems to be specifically a chastening of the Lord for sins committed. And when the sins are confessed that have been committed, these sins that have been committed or they are confessed and put away, the chastening is removed. Look at verse 16, "Confess therefore your sins one to another. Pray one for another, that you may be healed". If you've committed sins it shall be forgiven him. There is the sin question involved here. There wasn't such with Timothy, who had, evidently, a weak stomach and was given means. In the case of Epaphroditus, who overexerted himself in the service of our Lord, here it's a case where there is chastening of the Lord for sins committed and this man calls for the elders of the church.

Notice he doesn't go to some kind of a so-called healing meeting, but he himself calls for the elders of the church, not for some expert healer, but one who those who are called the Elders of the church. And they pray and they anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and there is sin involved. Confess therefore your sins one to another, not only in the time of sickness but confess

them always, at all times. And it's not that which is assumed by someone who claims to have clerical authority over us but is confession between believers. And pray one for another. The elder is not the only ones who can be used in this prayer ministry. And the latter part of the verse indicates why the believing prayer of any believer is availing, the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. And a wonderful example Elijah was a man of like passions, like feelings, like nature with us. He prayed fervently that it might not rain, rain not on the earth for three years and six months, your remember in 1 Kings, where Elijah comes before wicked, wicked Ahab and he tells wicked Ahab, "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew, nor rain these years except according to my word", 1 Kings 17:1.

Now to someone as well said it's as if the prophet Elijah had taken a key out of his pocket and closed the heavens of rain and of dew and then came back three and a half years later and opened them again. He prayed fervently that it might not rain. It rained not on the earth for three years and six months and he prayed again, and the Heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. All the believing prayer of any child of God is availing. Why? Because the supplication of a righteous man avails much and it's working, it's powerful. Little We Know friends, how much of the power of God we let loose when we pray and lay hold upon the omnipotent throne and the omnipotent hand of God. Now says the apostle James as he closes the Epistle, "My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him let him know that he who converted the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins". The suggestion here is that this is a backslider, one who's earned from the truth and he's converted and he converts that sinner from the error of his ways and so on, but a converted man, you see, can still be one who goes on sinning. And he says here is a case, "if any among you", it would seem to be among the group of believers, "he's erred away from the truth, he's gone astray,

from the truth, from the strict norm of the word to which he's adhered before this. And then he's converted, brought back, just as our Lord Jesus said to Peter, "I prayed for thee that thy faith fail not". And when thou art converted, when thou art turned around, remember thy brethren, the strength that you've gotten. Be sure you utilize it to bring others back into the pathway of righteousness and blessing. Now, he says anyone who converts him let him know that he who converts that sinner from the error of his ways will save a soul from death, that doesn't mean necessarily eternal death. It can mean physical death as in 1 Corinthians 11:30 where we read that because believers in the Corinthian church were not always heeding the Word of God, you remember what happened. Some of them were weak, some of them were sickly, and some among them slept. Some of them were even taken away with physical death as Ananias and Sapphira. The sins apparently are those of the person converted, not of the soul winner. Now when this is realized by others, they too will be encouraged to deal in similar fashion with sinners. There is no formal close to this epistle as in all the other New Testament epistles but we just read he's going to save a soul from death. He may definitely bring that man back from God's chastening that will take him even out of this life and cover a multitude of sins, save that man from much, much grief and win him for the will of God and for the work of God. Great preacher of England, Charles Haddon Spurgeon said once, "Some two years ago a poor woman accompanied by two of her neighbors came to my vestry and she was in deep distress. Her husband had fled the country. In her sorrow, she went to the house of God. Something I said in a sermon made her think I was personally familiar with her case. Of course I knew nothing about her. It was a general illustration that happened to fit a particular case. She told me her story and a very sad one it was. I said there's nothing we can do but to kneel down and cry to the Lord for the immediate conversion of your husband", said Spurgeon, "and we knelt down., I prayed the

Lord would touch the heart of that deserter, would convert that soul, bring him back to his home, make him realize his obligation to his wife and to his family. When we rose from our knees I said to the poor woman, 'Don't fret about the matter, I have assurance in my heart. I feel sure your husband is going to come home and that he will yet become connected with our church. She went away said Spurgeon. I forgot all about it. Some months after that she reappeared with her neighbors and a man whom she introduced to me as her husband. He had, thank God, come back. He had indeed come back. He had returned a converted man. When I made inquiry and I compared notes, we found that the very day that we had prayed for this man's conversion he was at that time on board a ship far away on the sea and he stumbled most unexpectedly on a stray copy of one of my sermons (one of Surgeon's sermons). He read the sermon. The truth went to his heart. He repented, he sought the Lord, and as soon as possible he returned to his wife and to his daily calling he was admitted a member of the church. His wife, who up to that time hadn't been a member, was also received into the fellowship of the church. That woman doesn't doubt the power of prayer. She didn't doubt the power of prayer after that. Oh friends, chapter 5. And so fittingly in an epistle of practice and ethic and practicality, with patience and prayer. Some folk may be ready to tell you that patience isn't very practical but oh it's a most practical thing in the Christian life. It will give you poise. It will give you equilibrium. It will give you balance. It will give you steadfastness. It will give you awareness of the will of God, and it will honor him. Patience and prayer and all this epistle had begun with prayer, you remember, for wisdom. We read that, "let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not and it shall be given to him". And he's to pray to ask the Lord, not with a double minded fashion. But he is to ask God to, willingly, prayerfully, wholeheartedly, believingly, confidently, with assurance. Friends let's give ourselves then to patient waiting for the Lord, to prayer, to service in behalf of souls.

Wonderful that this Epistle, so practical as it is, talks about what one believer can do to another believer and for another believer by way of helping that one from a life that has somehow become entangled and is displeasing to the Lord. The scripture tells us, you remember, in Galatians, and this is one that so needed to be stressed today, so many forget it. Galatians 6:1 "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to thyself lest thou also be tempted". I say let's give ourselves to patient waiting for the Lord. To prayer, to service on behalf of souls. They are eminently practical occupations. They will be blessed, blessed of God. Oh friends, in these few moments at the end of the broadcast, I want to ask whether you, as one who has been listening in perhaps you've never trusted Christ as your savior. You've never realized that God's word of condemnation is upon all those who have not trusted Christ. You never realized that before and you realize now that God must have righteousness first last and always he must have truth in the inward parts. It can't be just some life lived superficially and that you've fallen far short and that you're not any worse than others but you're no better than any other. We are born fallen creatures for while one man's sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so the death passed upon all man for that all have sinned. We've all sin and come short of the glory of God. No man worketh the righteousness of God. There's no man that's righteous and sinneth not. But here in his love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins and he is the propitiation for our sins, the satisfying sacrifice for our sins. Not for our sins only but for the sins of the whole world.

Have you trusted him friend? It's as simple as looking away from self to Christ. Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling. Other refuge have I none. Hangs my helpless soul on thee. Oh to trust Christ, to know him, in these so important days that are before us, as time is

ticking away, as days go on into weeks and months and years, and eternity draws on apace for so many, boast not thyself of tomorrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth, trust him. And you friends, who have been listening through the series in radio land to this hour, all remember God wants us not only to say we're believers but to live as believers and to bring honor to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Father. May the message of this wonderful epistle of James, practical as it is, may it reach our hearts, reach us, and transform us we pray, in Jesus name Amen.

[Choir sings hymn]

Announcer 1:

You've been listening to your radio Bible teacher, Dr. Louis T. Talbot, Chancellor of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles Inc. Address all mail to Dr. Louis T. Talbot 558 South Hope St. Los Angeles 17, California.

[Choir sings hymn]