

4:17 Knowing Right but Doing Wrong

GRACE ENABLES DOING GOOD.

CHRYSOSTOM: James does not remove the power to do good, but he shows that it is not just a matter of one's own will. To do good as we ought, we need the grace of God. CATENA.¹⁴

KNOWING COMPLICATES SINNING.

AUGUSTINE: Does the one who does not know how to do good and does not do it commit a sin? He certainly does, but the one who knows what is good and does not do it sins more grievously. ADULTEROUS MARRIAGES 9.¹⁵

THE FAITH PROCLAIMED MUST BE LIVED.

OECUMENIUS: Good deeds ought to come before preaching, so that it will be clear that it is a righteous man who is proclaiming the faith which is being expounded. COMMENTARY ON JAMES.¹⁶

5:1 You Rich, Weep and Howl

JUDGMENT DELAYED.

HESYCHIUS: God delays the judgment because of his love for humanity, so that those who repent may not suffer along with those who are condemned. CATENA.¹

REPENT WHILE STILL TIME.

HILARY OF ARLES: The rich must repent while there is still time for them to do so. James is speaking here of those rich people who have shown themselves to be too stingy to offer any help to the poor. INTRODUCTORY TRACTATE ON THE LETTER OF JAMES.²

CAST BREAD UPON WATERS.

OECUMENIUS: James makes their possession of wealth and their stinginess a source of lamentation for those who store up their riches for burial and loss rather than give them to the needy. For the person who gives his wealth to the poor does not lose it but keeps every penny. This is why the Preacher said: "Cast your bread upon the waters," ³ that is, upon the apparent corruption and decadence of this world, and it will not be lost, but rather it will preserve us from destruction. COMMENTARY ON JAMES.⁴

5:2 *Wealth Rots Away*

5:3 *Wealth Condemns the Wealthy*

LUXURY COMES TO NOTHING.

CHRYSOSTOM: Let us go in by the narrow way. How long will luxury last? How long will there be licentiousness? Have not the heedless among us been warned? What about the mockers and the procrastinators? Will not their banquets and gluttony and selfsatisfaction, not to mention their wealth, their possessions and their property all disappear? What reward have they got? Death. And what will their end be? Dust and ashes, urns and worms. CATENA.⁸

YOUR RICHES HAVE ROTTED.

HILARY OF ARLES: It is true of course that gold does not rust, but James is comparing it to material things which do rust in the course of time. INTRODUCTORY TRACTATE ON THE LETTER OF JAMES.⁹

5:4 *Wages Kept Back by Fraud*

PREPARED FOR DESTRUCTION.

THEOPHYLACT: This accusation is a digression directed against the Jewish leaders who robbed the poor and covered themselves with all manner of riches. But they were being prepared for destruction at the hands of the Romans, not least because they condemned our Lord to death. COMMENTARY ON JAMES.¹²

The Cries of the Harvesters

THE EARS OF THE LORD.

HILARY OF ARLES: What James means here is not that God has ears but that he can use his power to put right the wrongs which exist on earth. INTRODUCTORY TRACTATE ON THE LETTER OF JAMES.¹³

5:5 Luxury and Pleasure

THE SOUL SET FREE FROM GLUTTONY.

CHRYSOSTOM: What then? Has luxury been condemned? It certainly has—so why do you continue to strive for it? A man has made bread, but the excess has been trimmed away. A man has made wine, but the excess has been cut off there also. God desires that we should pray not for impure food but for souls set free from excess. For everything that God has created is good, and nothing which has been received with thanks is to be despised. CATENA.¹⁴

5:6 You Have Killed the Righteous Man

WHO IS THE RIGHTEOUS MAN?

THEOPHYLACT: It cannot be denied that this verse refers to Christ, especially since James adds that there was no resistance. Nevertheless it also includes others who suffered at the hands of the Jews, and he may even have been speaking prophetically about his own approaching death. COMMENTARY ON JAMES.¹⁶

5:7 Wait Patiently for the Lord to Come

GOD WAITS FOR REPENTANCE.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: If God delays the punishment of sinners, waiting for them to repent, it is not because his character has changed, so that now he loves sin. Rather he is giving them time to repent. CATENA.¹

5:8 The Lord Is Coming Soon

LONGSUFFERING AND PATIENCE.

CHRYSOSTOM: Longsuffering toward one another and patience to those outside. Longsuffering is what we show toward those who can return it, and patience is how we act toward those who cannot do the same to us. CATENA.²

5:9 Your Judge Is Almost Here

5:10 *An Example of Suffering and Patience*

5:11 *The Joy of Endurance*

THE EXAMPLE OF JOB.

CHRYSOSTOM: It is a great thing if we can give thanks with great joy. But there is such a thing as giving thanks out of fear, and also such a thing as giving thanks in grief. This is what Job did when, in great suffering, he thanked God, saying: "The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away." ⁶ Let no one say that he was not grieving over what had happened to him or that he did not feel it deeply. Do not take away the great praise due to the righteous.... How great is this praise? Tell me, in what circumstances do you bless Job? Is it when he had all those camels and flocks and herds? Or is it when he says: "The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away"? For the devil also harms us not in order to take our possessions away so that we have nothing left but so that when that happens he can force us to curse God because of it.

CATENA.⁷

HOPE FOR ETERNAL REWARDS.

AUGUSTINE: James means: "Bear your temporal misfortunes as Job did, but do not hope for temporal goods as a reward for your patience, such as were returned to him double. Rather hope for the eternal goods which the Lord went before us to secure." LETTERS 140.10.⁸