

## **JAMES: PRACTICING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**

### **X. Heeding God In Employing Others**

**(James 5:1-6)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. Though the Epistle of James offers little formal structure and is less concerned about theological concepts than other New Testament works, it is intensely practical, explaining how to be "doers" of God's Word, James 1:22.
- B. James 5:1-6 addresses the need for those who employ others to work for them to obey the Lord in their business activities, so we view the passage for our insight and edification (as follows):

#### **II. Heeding God In Employing Others, James 5:1-6.**

- A. Employment in the Ancient Near East consisted either of a self-employed farmer, merchant, craftsman or of a hired hand or a slave who was hired or owned by another man different from today's large corporations.
- B. James 5:1-6 addresses rich men who employed other men, and it provides direction for these employers:
  - 1. Wealthy people who own their own businesses and who hire others to work for them are easily tempted to have "a false sense of security and an insatiable love of power; and 'all power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.'" ( R. V. G. Tasker, The General Epistle of James, 1974, p. 109)
  - 2. Accordingly, James' instruction to rich employers in James 5:1-6 is purely negative, countering their typical false sense of security and love of abusive power over their employees. We thus view James' approach while also providing a positive set of guidelines from other Scripture passages (as follows):
    - a. In James 5:1-3, the writer countered the sense of false security typical of the rich in his day, and what often afflicts wealthy people today, by calling them to grieve for the misery God will unleash upon them for trusting in their riches and for hoarding them in a form of idolatry. As for positive direction on this issue, the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 provided several guidelines (as follows):
      - i. Rich employers must not be proud of their wealthy status, 1 Timothy 6:17a.
      - ii. Rich employers must not trust in wealth that is uncertain (1 Timothy 6:17b), but trust in God Who provides us richly all things to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17c).
      - iii. Rich employers must instead do good with their wealth, using it to perform good works in generously sharing of their wealth to help others in need toward building up eternal rewards from God for performing such works. (1 Timothy 6:18-19)
    - b. In James 5:4-6, the writer countered the rich employer's typical abuses toward his employees in having withheld wages from their employees, what angered the Lord, and the further luxurious living by the rich on the hoarded riches due to these employers not having paid their employees, further infuriating the Lord, setting up the rich employers for certain divine judgment! As for positive direction in this issue, the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:9 gave several directives (as follows):
      - i. The institution addressed in this verse is that of slavery where the master owned the slave and could thus more readily abuse him, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Ephesians 6:5.
      - ii. However, the relation of master with his slave corresponds to that of the employer with his employee(s), so we apply this verse in principle to the rich employer and his employees:
        - 1) Rich employers must realize that they must not use their position of power to threaten their employees, for the rich employers themselves are accountable to their Master, the Lord in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him between the employer and his employees!
        - 2) Thus, the rich employer must realize that if he wants his business to enjoy God's blessing, he must view himself as accountable to God for how he treats his employees or he will suffer divine punishment! (cf. also Deuteronomy 17:20a)
        - 3) To illustrate this in a practical sense, (a) the rich employer must pay his employees in a timely way as a top priority and (b) he must provide nurturing a work environment to meet his employees' needs, what will also motivate his employees to be even more productive.

***Lesson:* With the great temptation for rich employers to trust in their wealth for security and to exercise power over their employees, rich employers must realize that God is the TRUE Source of their wealth and business success, that they are accountable to GOD to trust in HIM and to obey HIM in treating their employees with respect, amply paying them in a timely manner and providing as nurturing work environment for God's blessing.**

***Application:* May we who hire others realize our accountability before God for how we treat those workers.**