

## James 5:1 – 8 Justice for the Poor and Oppressed

### A. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

**5:1-8** Attend to this, you rich people, weep and howl in view of the miseries that are coming your way. <sup>2</sup>Your wealth has become rotten, your clothes moth-eaten, <sup>3</sup>your gold and silver tarnished; and their corrosion will be evidence against you, and devour your flesh like fire. You have amassed wealth for the last days. <sup>4</sup>See how the wages of the workers who have reaped your fields, which have been kept back by you, are shouting aloud. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the almighty Lord. <sup>5</sup>You have lived off the land in luxury and self-indulgence. You have gorged yourselves in the day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You have condemned and killed the just man; he was not resisting you. <sup>7</sup>Be patient then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to produce its choice crop and how patient he is for it until [the land] receives the early and late [rainfall]. <sup>8</sup>You too are to be patient and confirm your lives, since the Lord's coming is at hand. (Martin, WBC<sup>1</sup>)

The first of two textual variants detailed in UBS<sup>4</sup> for this passage occurs in verse 4. The evidence favouring the more descriptive ἀπεστερημενος “held back by fraud” is weighty,<sup>2</sup> yet the slight variation ἀφυστερημενος “withheld”, while attested to by fewer witnesses has the earliest support of the two most highly regarded uncial witnesses.<sup>3</sup> An examination of the internal evidence suggests that the variants could be due to an error of sight (given a difference of only two letters), or perhaps a move from ἀφυστερημενος to the stronger form of ἀπεστερημενος. In addition, it is possible that the rare word ἀφυστερημενος was changed to the more common equivalent ἀπεστερημενος. While a decision based on external

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *James* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1988), 171, 185.

<sup>2</sup> ἀπεστερημενος “held back by fraud” is supported by numerous Alexandrian texts including key miniscule 1739, and across all text families.

<sup>3</sup> ἀφυστερημενος “withheld” only has Alexandrian support, but this includes  $\aleph$  and B\* (4<sup>th</sup> C). Agreement between  $\aleph$  and B\* is considered significant.

evidence alone would be difficult, the internal evidence determines the final support in favour of the earlier, more obscure variant ἀφυστερημενος “withheld”.<sup>4</sup>

The second variant occurs in verse 7. The three possibilities (1) λαβη “it receives”, (2) λαβη ὑετον “it receives rain” and (3) λαβη καρπον “he [the farmer] receives fruit/ produce”, differ in meaning according to whether it is the land that receives rain, or the farmer that receives fruit. Variant (1) has early and weighty support<sup>5</sup> across all text families, and variant (2) also has uncial support<sup>6</sup> and numerous less significant Byzantine minuscules. Early attestation to λαβη καρπον, (variant 3) is given by  $\aleph$  yet this variant has Alexandrian support alone.<sup>7</sup> A preference to the shorter, and slightly more ambiguous reading would support variant 1. It is likely that λαβη ὑετον “he receives rain” or λαβη καρπον “he receives fruit/ produce” were scribal additions to improve clarity. As such, Variant 1 is most likely the best choice since it has strong internal and external support.

## B. INTRODUCTION

The authorship of this letter is ascribed to James (1:1). There is strong internal and external evidence supporting the traditional view that this James is the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church. For a discussion of this evidence and the alternatives see Moo<sup>8</sup>. While some claim a date just prior to James’ martyrdom

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<sup>4</sup> While Davids, *James*, 177, notes the later being more fitting in the context of an appeal to traditional language in its strongest forms, the former which is earlier and more difficult is preferred. Amazingly, Metzger’s committee has given this variant an ‘A’ rating in favour of ἀπεστερημενος, yet Metzger appears to disagree with the decision of the committee. He adds the following post-script: “The earliest reading appears to be the rare word ἀφυστερημενος, which copyists emended to a more familiar word.” B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; UBS, 1994), 614.

<sup>5</sup> λαβη has support from Alexandrian uncials B and 048, as well as P<sup>74</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> λαβη ὑετον has uncial support of A,  $\Psi$  and 33.

<sup>7</sup> While  $\aleph$  is a chief witness, it is not as highly regarded when at odds with other Alexandrian texts.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *James* (TNTC; Leicester: IVP, 1985), 22.

in A.D. 62, arguments in favour of an earlier date of A.D. 45–48 preceding the Jerusalem Council are more compelling.<sup>9</sup>

James is most likely addressing Christian Jews who have been scattered as a result of persecution (1:1).<sup>10</sup> These Jews, while aspiring for sincere faith also seek material wealth (2:5, 14; 4:1-5). It would seem that the recipients are mainly the poor and marginalised (1:9). While the rich addressed in the letter may have been part of the intended readership (4:13-16; 5:1-6), it is more likely that this is a polemic against aristocratic Jews outside of Jewish-Christian communities, possibly linked to surrounding synagogues.<sup>11</sup>

In response to building tensions amongst his fellow Jews (4:1) regarding class and racial differences, James' purpose is to command, exhort and encourage.<sup>12</sup> Aristocratic Jewish landowners pursued peace with Rome through politics and were resented by the Jewish lower class who held a strong sense of Jewish-nationalism and anti-Roman sentiments.<sup>13</sup> The social climate of this setting would later climax in the war of the Jews in A.D 66 – 70. There was very little upward mobility between the classes, and the lower class who lived a hand-to-mouth existence experienced even greater hardship during times of famine when the aristocratic landowners would try to maximise their profits.<sup>14</sup> During famine or drought, the smaller farmers were often forced to sell their farms to wealthier landowners (who had more capital reserve) and become tenant farmers, or take out loans at high interest.<sup>15</sup> With a deep compassion for the poor, marginalised and oppressed, James writes to his

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<sup>9</sup> Firstly, James' addressing of a misunderstanding resultant from Paul's teaching re justification by faith (James 2) is best explained by an early date of James since James and Paul would later meet at the Jerusalem Council, where James could better understand exactly what Paul meant. Secondly, there is no mention of the destabilising Jew-Gentile issues particularly re circumcision, which arose just prior to, and remained significant after the Jerusalem Council. For a concise summary of these issues see Moo, *James*, 33-34.

<sup>10</sup> Moo, *James*, 32-33.

<sup>11</sup> R.W. Wall, 'James, Letter of', in *Dictionary of the Latter New Testament and its Developments* (ed. R.P.Martin & P.H.Davids; Downers Grove: IVP, 1997), 549.

<sup>12</sup> Moo, *James*, 36.

<sup>13</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary – New Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 688-89.

<sup>14</sup> Wall, *James*, 550.

<sup>15</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *James* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1988), 174.

fellow Jews who are experiencing trials (1:2). He writes to (1) encourage, giving practical directives to ensure a life that reflects their faith, and (2) to correct misgivings and warn against backslidings that may deny it.<sup>16</sup>

James 5:1-8 spans two distinct sections that stand in parallelism (5:1-6 and 5:7-11).<sup>17</sup> Given strong parallels with Jewish wisdom and apocalyptic writings, vv1-6 have the genre of an oracle of judgement,<sup>18</sup> which in these verses are levelled against rich oppressors. Verses 7-8 are best understood as parenthesis,<sup>19</sup> encouraging the audience towards perseverance in the midst of trials. Verses 1-6 conclude a larger section of warnings and rebukes (4:1-5:6) including (i) a warning against quarrels and pride (4:1-10), (ii) warnings regarding talking against brothers and sisters (4:11-12) and (iii) a rebuke of arrogant merchants (4:13-17). Verses 7-8 begin a new section of encouragement and exhortation (5:7-20) beginning with (i) perseverance in the midst of trials (5:7-12), followed by (ii) encouragement to pray in the midst of trials (5:13-18), and concluded by (iii) an exhortation to assist those who have wandered away (5:19-20).

The thematic introduction (1:2-19) introduces both specific judgements of the rich (vv10-11, 16) and encouragement to believers to persevere in the midst of trials (vv2, 9, 12). Judgements on the rich are then found again in 2:6-7 (where their function is to deter the audience from prejudice), and then become the focus of the larger section of warnings outlined above (4:1-5:6). After their introduction, specific exhortations regarding perseverance are only picked up in the second section of the passage being discussed (5:7-8). The theme of perseverance remains in view in the following few verses (5:9-11).

<sup>16</sup> James Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (NICTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 20.

<sup>17</sup> Martin, *James*, 186. Others describe Jas. 5:1-6 as part of a more elaborate structure, such as Crotty who sees this passage as the centre of a chiasm from 4:11-5:11, however this seems to betray a plain reading of the text. Crotty, R. 'The Literary Structure of the Letter of James', *AusBR* 40 (1992), 53.

<sup>18</sup> Keener, *IVP*, 700.

<sup>19</sup> While there has been a movement away from viewing James overall as simply paraenesis (discussed by Donald J. Verseput, 'Genre and Story: The Community Setting of the Epistle of James', *CBQ* 62/1 (2000), 96-110), as a broad category paraenesis adequately sums up this particular element of the text since it is assumed here that this text is to have a broad readership (i.e not written with a specific church in mind cf. Jas. 1:1).

## C. VERSE ANALYSIS

1 A sharp tone of prophetic denunciation introduces a change of addressee from the previous section. James delivers this denunciation to the rich oppressors with a strong poverty/piety tradition as a background. As a result of the exile and circumstances surrounding the reign of Antiochus Epiphanies, there was a move away from wealth being seen as a sign of God's blessing, and by the end of the inter-testamental period, poverty had almost become synonymous with piety.<sup>20</sup> This poverty/piety theme, having been further developed by the teachings of Jesus (Matt. 11:5; Mk. 10:25; Lk. 6:20-25; 12:16-21; 16:19-31) is evident throughout the epistle, and comes into clear focus in this passage.<sup>21</sup> James calls on the rich not to repent, but rather lament as a fitting response to the punishment that is coming to them. Martin aptly describes κλαύσατε "weep" as a proper response to disaster (La. 1:1-2; Is. 15:2-3, Je. 9:1; 13:17),<sup>22</sup> while the word ὀλολύζοντες "howl" (being found twenty-one times in the LXX, all of which are in the prophets), is used only here in the NT, further developing the prophetic tone. James builds upon a concept of denunciation of the rich (Amos 6:1-8; Micah 2:2), which would have been familiar to his audience, whereby the prophet is so sure of the impending destruction that it is appropriate for weeping to begin immediately.<sup>23</sup>

2 – 3a Given the certainty of the outcome (as is the case in the mind of a prophet), James declares 'that which will be', as though it were a present reality.<sup>24</sup> Speaking first of the temporal nature of riches in general (πλοῦτος), James then targets more specifically the two traditional forms of wealth in the Greco Roman world other than

<sup>20</sup> See Peter H. Davids, 'Theological Perspectives on the Epistle of James', *JETS* 23/2 (1980), 100; and citations there. See also, Moo's section on 'Poverty and Wealth'. Moo, *James*, 53-55.

<sup>21</sup> However, it should be noted that the rich in James are not condemned simply for being rich. Reasons for their unrighteousness are made clear in the following verses. See *comment v3b & 4*.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Davids, *Epistle of James : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (TIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

<sup>23</sup> Davids, *James*, 175.

<sup>24</sup> So, Davids, *James*, 175; Adamson, *James* 185; Martin, *James*, 177, who describe the use of the three perfects as a "prophetic anticipation" of the event, however Moo concedes some ground referring to Ropes who disagrees given the following switch to future judgement. As such Moo prefers the perfect tenses to emphasise the present worthless state of the riches. Moo, *James*, 161.

land ownership: clothes, and gold and silver. Davids suggests that the scientifically peculiar description of gold and silver as having rusted is proverbial (e.g Bar. 6:11b-12, 24; Sir. 29:10), signifying both the temporal nature of wealth as well as its uselessness.<sup>25</sup> This echoes the common OT and wider Jewish teaching regarding the folly of putting ones faith in material possessions.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, while the poor are going without, the wealth of the rich is not even being used, but rusting away. This folly of hoarding possessions is found also in Matt 6:19-20 as part of Jesus' sermon on the mount as well as Luke 12:33. James develops the judgement of the rich oppressors as resulting from a denial this teaching, and the evidence brought against them is the rust of the unused wealth. Further developing the prophetic denouncement, James then presents a terrible punishment befitting the crime: in the same way that rust eats away at metal, so too will it eat away at their flesh. A picture of God's judgement is clearly in view here (cf. Judith 16:17).<sup>27</sup>

**3b** Hoarding of wealth is the first accusation now levelled against the rich landowners. Not only that, but in the face of the teaching regarding Jesus' sudden return (Matt. 24:36-44; Mk. 13:33-37; 1 Thes. 5:2), and in the climate of the general early Christian belief of an imminent parousia (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2; 1 Jn. 2:18; Jude 17-18),<sup>28</sup> they have hoarded their wealth *in the last days*. James previously describes the sharing of wealth as a sign of saving faith (2:14-16) and in light of this contrast, Martin emphasises that their hoarding of wealth given the impending return of Christ underlines their folly.<sup>29</sup>

**4** The particular nature of the iniquitous method of gathering wealth now gains the focus. The concept of a hired hand to work the fields was common. While a

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<sup>25</sup> Davids, *James*, 176.

<sup>26</sup> Moo, *James*, 161.

<sup>27</sup> Moo, *James*, 161. See also Nu. 12:12; Is. 30:27; Ezk. 7:19; 15:7; Am. 1:12, 14; 5:6; 7:4; Ps. 21:9; Wis. 1:18; Acts 11:5; 1QH 3:29; 6:18-19; 8:30-31. Davids, *James*, 176.

<sup>28</sup> While there is some discussion regarding whether James sees himself as participating in the last days or whether he considers them as in the more distant future, given the wider NT background, and the use of ἐν ('in' here regarding a point in time) it is preferable to view James as considering himself to be participating in the last days. So, Martin, *James*, 178; Moo, *James*, 162. [See also below, n37](#)

<sup>29</sup> Martin, *James*, 178.

decision between ἀφυστερημενος ('withheld' - an NT *hapax legomenon*) and ἀπεστερημενος ('held back by fraud') is difficult (here, 'withheld' is the preferred variant; see *Text and Translation* above), given that it was common for labourers to be denied their wages without any recourse for appeal,<sup>30</sup> the fraudulent nature of the withholding of wages can be assumed given both the historical and textual context. Describing the cries of the harvesters as having reached the ears of the κυρίου Σαβαώθ (Lord of Hosts) further illuminates the impending judgement. This Hebrew loan word, used almost exclusively by the prophets<sup>31</sup> here serves as an appeal to the majestic and transcendent God who avenges injustice.<sup>32</sup>

**5** James further expounds his denunciation of the ungodly rich building from v3b. The two verbs describing the lifestyles of the rich, lived in luxury (ἐτροφήσατε) and wantonness (ἐσπαταλήσατε), vary slightly in meaning. While the former (an NT *hapax legomenon*) is neutral in the OT occurrences (Neh. 9:25; Sir. 14:4; Isa. 66:11), the latter has a more negative sense suggestive of vice and an actively sinful lifestyle (LXX Ezek. 16:49).<sup>33</sup> The foreboding judgement that will result from this lifestyle is hinted at by the phrase ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς "on the earth".<sup>34</sup> Here the picture of luxurious living on the earth is fitting of the rich man in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31). This lifestyle of luxury in the face of the poverty of others is condemned in Luke as well as in other Jewish writings (Am. 2:6-8; 8:4-6; Eth. Enoch 98:11; 102:9-10).<sup>35</sup> The culpability of this lifestyle and its impending judgement is emphasised by its effect, that is, those who indulge in it are fattening their hearts in the *day of slaughter*. The audience is aware that 'that which is fattened is also that which is slaughtered.' However, there is

<sup>30</sup> Davids points out numerous laws and prophetic threats aimed at curbing this injustice (Lv. 19:13; Dt. 24:14-15; Jb. 7:1-2; 24:10; 31:13, 38-40; Je. 22:13; Mal. 3:5; Sir. 7:20; 31:4; 34:21ff.; Tob. 4:14; Mt. 20:8) Davids, *James*, 177.

<sup>31</sup> Of 65 uses in LXX, 58 are by the prophets, 56 of which are by Isaiah. E.g. Is 2:12; 5:7,9,24; 8:18; 10:16; 13:13; 18:7; 19:16, 17,18; 21:10; 22:5, 14; 28:29; 29:5; 39:5. Of particular interest is Is. 5:7 where the context is of impending judgement as a result of sinful lifestyles.

<sup>32</sup> Adamson, *James*, 186.

<sup>33</sup> ἐσπαταλήσατε is used here in the context of judgement to describe the life-style of those in Sodom, highlighting also their neglect of the poor.

<sup>34</sup> Moo, *James*, 165.

<sup>35</sup> Davids, *James*, 178.

some uncertainty surrounding the phrase “day of slaughter”. Martin suggests it is best understood in light of Jer. 12:3 where the “day” is a time which is coming when the oppressors will be judged.<sup>36</sup> While the timing of this “day” is treated in varying ways, it is probably best to view it as a day of judgement in the not too distant future, consistent with James’ perception (as suggested above) that he is participating in the last days.<sup>37</sup>

**6** A final declaration of guilt delivers the crescendo of James’ prophetic denouncement. The actions of the wealthy landowners have culminated in the death of the innocent. James implies here that in a sense, the rich have sat in judgement on the poor, condemning them to death. This is probably best understood as a judicial process, where the rich abuse the legal system to gain wealth and accumulate property, and the poor have no recourse for justice through this system.<sup>38</sup> As a result, starvation leads to death, and the guilt rightly falls on those who caused the starvation. The guilt of the rich is further emphasised by the defenceless situation of the oppressed: *who does not resist you* (NRSV).<sup>39</sup> It is unlikely that ‘righteous one’ refers to Christ,<sup>40</sup> but is better understood here as a generic collective term used of righteous sufferers.<sup>41</sup>

**7** Changing addressees, James continues the previous thought moving from an oracle of judgement on the rich landowners to an exhortation of the beloved to persevere through injustice. An aspect of farming common to the audience is presented as a model of patience. The farmer must wait, despite potential

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<sup>36</sup> Martin, *James*, 173.

<sup>37</sup> Davids surveys various approaches where ‘day of slaughter’ is taken to occur in past, present, or future, concluding that it is the “eschatological day of judgement” that James is referring to. Davids, *James*, 178-79.

<sup>38</sup> Moo, *James*, 166. This position of Moo is preferable to that of Martin. Martin, while affirming the judicial aspect, moves away from what he refers to as “symbolic killing” such as the case regarding the withholding of wages. Martin, *James*, 181.

<sup>39</sup> An alternate possible translation presents this clause as a rhetorical question “does he not resist you?” with the subject of the verb as God, implying that God does indeed resist them. Moo, *James*, 167. Or with the oppressed as the subject, and their resistance is in the form of crying out to God. Davids, *James*, 180.

<sup>40</sup> A correlation of the ‘righteous one’ to Christ here would be too cryptic and out character with the rest of the passage. Adamson, *James*, 189.

<sup>41</sup> Davids, *James*, 179-80.

starvation and hardship, for the *πρόϊμον καὶ ὄψιμον* “early and latter [rain]” since the rain at the beginning and end of the growing season are crucial for the crop.<sup>42</sup> This phrase appears only here in the NT, and carries its OT meaning.<sup>43</sup> In the LXX the early and late rains always have Yahweh as their source (Joel 2:23; Zec. 10:1), and are seen as a blessing from God (Deut. 11:14; Zac. 10:1). The assurance of the early and latter rains is also used as a simile of the Lord’s rescue (Hos. 6:3-4).<sup>44</sup> It is fitting then, that James utilises this phrase to bolster the call for patience *until the coming of the Lord*.<sup>45</sup> Further, Adamson notes that the picture of a farmer awaiting harvest is a common Jewish picture of both God’s salvation and the final judgement.<sup>46</sup> As such, in light of pending restoration, James here prescribes patient endurance rather than active resistance.

**8** With the end in sight, James *reiterates* the call to patience of the previous verse. The phrase *στηρίξατε τὰς καρδίας* “establish your hearts” is elsewhere in the NT only found in 1 Thes. 3:13 as an encouragement towards holy living in connection with the parousia of Christ. In the LXX, the phrase is used in the sense of preparing for a journey (Judg. 19:5, 8), and in gaining wisdom in preparation for life and tough times (Sir. 6:37; 22:6).<sup>47</sup> James uses this phrase in a similar sense calling his audience to endurance until the parousia of Christ. Davids makes the point that while James considers the parousia of the Lord to be near (given use of ἤγγικεν – perfect tense cf. Mk. 1:15; Rom. 13:12; Heb. 10:25; 1 Pet. 4:7), the main

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<sup>42</sup> Martin, *James*, 190.

<sup>43</sup> L. L. Morris, ‘Weather’, in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (3 vols; ed. Colin Brown; Exeter: Paternoster, 1978, Vol. 3), 1003.

<sup>44</sup> “*let us follow on to know the Lord: we shall find him ready as the morning, and will come to us as the early and latter rain to the earth.*” (Hos. 6:4-3) Hosea is also set against the broader social setting of the rich oppressing the poor. This verse depicts the Lord coming to rescue his people.

<sup>45</sup> There is some discussion regarding whether this “coming of the Lord” refers to the coming of God or the return of Jesus. Given the view that James is a strongly Christian document, rather than a scantily Christianised Jewish one (so, Davids, *James*, 182), the technical use of *παρουσία* most likely refers to the return of Christ.

<sup>46</sup> E.g., Joel 3:13; Matt. 4:29. Adamson, *James*, 191.

<sup>47</sup> “*As timber girt and bound together in a building cannot be loosed with shaking: so the heart that is established <sic> by advised counsel shall fear at no time.*” (Sir. 22:16) The usage here involves gaining wisdom for the purpose of enduring tough times.

thrust is not regarding the timeframe of the parousia, but whether or not they endure to the end.<sup>48</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

James declares that the hoarding of wealth by the rich is utterly futile. Moreover, the fruit of their oppression of the poor is the sure judgement exacted by the majestic and transcendent God who avenges injustice. However, while verbally addressing the ungodly rich outside of the audience, the function of this prophetic denunciation is more adequately seen to be for the purpose of encouraging the Christian audience by declaring a coming end to their oppression and the certain demise of their oppressors. Rather than active resistance, James goads his audience toward patient endurance of their hardships in light of the certain (and imminent) judgement of God.

#### **E. APPLICATION**

A reading of this passage divorced from an understanding of the social setting of its audience as well as the purpose of the author, coupled with an over-simplified view of our current western culture, leaves the modern reader in danger of two key errors regarding contemporary application. The first is to be intimidated by the potential reaction of an affluent upper-middle-class congregation to this passage resulting in simply sweeping the passage aside altogether, while the second, perhaps at the other end of the spectrum, is using this passage as a proof text in support of certain political persuasions, including anti-rich or anti-capitalist rhetoric.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Davids, *James*, 184.

<sup>49</sup> For a pragmatic step towards a *via media*, see a great article by Warden. Though generalising, he highlights the disparity between Evangelicals who are quite good at feeding the “indignant poor” through soup kitchens and the like, yet tend to increase the divide between rich and poor by supporting political policy that tends to increase and perpetuate both the power of the rich and the poverty of the poor. His application from the book of James is for Christians to be advocates for the “working poor” and support political policies that “give the working poor resources to claim a more equitable share of the products and services a society produces.” Duane Warden, ‘The Rich and Poor in James: Implications for Institutionalized Partiality’,

More fitting applications are those aligned with the original spirit of the text, *encouraging* believers who find themselves having been forced into destructive cycles of poverty – be it financial, spiritual, social, or emotional. At the same time though, the judgement on the unjust contemporary figures of power must not be watered down. Crotty transposes the ‘poor’ into today’s Western culture as those who have been marginalised by sexist practices, racism, ethnocentrism, and unjust economic strategies.<sup>50</sup> The ‘rich’ then, are those who, by wielding their power, or unjustly exercising their rights, practice these injustices. Believers who are in these hopeless positions are to be encouraged to resist the need for personal vengeance, and “hang in there” waiting for *God’s* final restoration and judgement. For those in the pews who have been victims of physical or sexual abuse, while their current emotional landscape may be one of desolation, they can be assured of a day where justice will be done, and their lives will be restored.

This passage may also be used to encourage doctors, nurses, youth workers and other professionals who have been the victims of *unfair* litigation. In a recent conversation with a doctor, it was suggested that approximately forty-five percent of GPs who undergo litigation, choose never to return to their practice. One hears stories of doctors, who when served with notice of litigation proceedings, choose to take their own life rather than be forced into this cycle of professional and social poverty. Woe to you who unfairly drag others into court, and drag their name through the mud! You have murdered the one who sought to heal you! Your so-called compensation will be your condemnation. To those who face unjust professional and social bankruptcy, I urge you to endure the sully of your name, in light of the final day of justice that is coming.

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*JETS* 43/2 (2000), 247-257. See especially ‘III. Implications of James’s Message for a Christian Stance on Public Policy’ pp. 253-256.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Crotty, ‘Identifying the Poor in the Letter of James’, *Colloquium* 27/1 (1995), 19.

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