

## THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

### Theme: "The Testing of Your Faith"

Lesson: 34

Text: 5:5-6

Date: 11-19-23

Trinity Lutheran Church

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### TEXT AND STUDY NOTES

(5) You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence.

You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

(6) You have condemned; you have murdered **the righteous person. He does not resist you.**

(Ezek 16:19; Am 6:1; Jer 12:3; 25:34;

Mt 10:41; 13:43; 25:37,46; 27:13-26; Mark 15:1-15; Lk 1:6; 2:25; 16:19-31; 23:50;

John 18:33-40; 19:1-22; Ac 3:13, 14; 7:52; 22:14;

Rom 1:17; 5:7,8, 19; Gal 3:11; 1 Tim 5:6; Heb 10:38;

1 Pet 3:12; 2 Pet 2:13; 1 Jn 3:7; Rev 19:8)

### Commentary on James – "The Epistle of Faith" – Dr. David Scaer - CPH

The sentence, "You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you" has been taken by some ancient church fathers and some contemporary commentators as a reference to Christ's crucifixion, though most commentators tend to distance themselves from this Christological interpretation. Preferred often is understanding "the righteous man" in a generic sense. This would allow for James to be included. It seems best to take this as a specific reference to Jesus primarily and to persecuted Christians secondarily. James' Christology involves the church suffering at the hands of God's enemies.

Throughout this epistle there is an underlying Christology with references to Christ's humility and exaltation. In the eschatological references James is careful to identify Jesus as the Lord. In this final chapter James will continue to refer to Jesus (5:4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15). It would fit the context for James here to make another Christological reference to Christ in the statement about killing the righteous man. At least nine New Testament references are made to Jesus as the Righteous One (*ho dikaios*).<sup>5</sup> Significant among these is Stephen's defense (Acts 7:52) addressed to the same audience for whom James' words are intended:

Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute (*ediōxan*)? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One (*tou dikaiou*), whom you now have betrayed and murdered (*phoneis*).

The audience whom James addressed were accustomed to hearing Jesus referred to as the Righteous One.<sup>6</sup>

Their flight from Jerusalem as a result of persecution was the occasion for this epistle and came shortly after Stephen's martyrdom. This martyrdom was the part of the persecutions which they were now facing somewhat unsuccessfully. James here uses the past tense of the aorist. James' terminology is forensic and suggests an act of legal prosecution and execution. This certainly fits Christ's trial and execution, instigated by the Jews. The rich whom James is addressing could have been the same people spoken to by Peter and Stephen in the addresses recorded in Acts.

"He does not resist you" (5:6) is present tense and suggests to some that "the righteous man" is generic, referring to suffering Christians in general. The phrase "the Righteous One" is appropriately reserved for God and His Messiah. The Lord of hosts is the Righteous One. The problem of the present tense used in describing the nonresistance of the Righteous One may be resolved by seeing the continued suffering of the Messiah in His people. Actions against Christians are directed against Christ also, since Christ and His church are organically joined. This theme has become axiomatic to James. "He does not resist you" would be similar in meaning to Jesus' words to Paul: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting (*diōkeis*)" (Acts 9:5). Though Jesus is glorified, He indicts Paul for persecuting Him, though Paul had not known or persecuted the earthly Jesus. Even if a generic sense is seen as fitting, it must nevertheless have some Christological overtones. The context and the wording still favor understanding this as a reference to Christ. The James 5:6. Nothing would be more damaging for the rich who persecuted these congregations than to have received the indictment leveled against those responsible for Jesus' crucifixion. The "rich" can only be understood as Christ's enemies. The friend of the world is the enemy of God (4:4) and the murderer of Christ (5:6).

### LIFE APPLICATION

The world condemned and murdered the righteous person,  
Jesus Christ, who did not resist them.

How today will the world condemn and murder the righteous persons,  
Christians, who do not resist them?